



# **Lightweight Curtain Fabric Ideas – Examining Differences in Interior Textile Brands’ Looks in Various Geographic Market Areas**

**Ilona Damski**





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**Master of Arts Thesis  
Fashion, Clothing and Textile Design  
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### Abstract

Due to the technically complex creative process of designing interior fabrics, much of the creative work happens in textile mills. Therefore, textile designers working in weaving mills influence significantly upcoming textile designs' aesthetics and qualities. Interior textile brands develop coordinated textile collections by selecting and modifying fabrics from textile idea collections presented by the weaving mills.

The purpose of this practice-based thesis is to examine the aspects that the textile designer needs to consider while creating lightweight curtain fabrics for the contract-residential market whilst the fabrics are aimed at medium-high level textile brands in various geographic market areas.

The background research of this thesis presents the actors and the textile production phases in the interior textile industry to understand their influence on the interior textiles' aesthetics and qualities. Furthermore, it explores the trends' effect in curtain fabrics and presents the trend forecasting industry. Finally, it searches for the differences and similarities between the textile editors in North Europe, the UK and the USA by presenting selected textile brands based in market areas mentioned above.

The creative part, the design case of this thesis is developed in collaboration with the Italian weaving mill Lodetex. The section uncovers the creative process and presents the textile idea portfolios of lightweight curtain fabrics, which are aimed at Lodetex's customers in North Europe, the UK and the USA. The textile idea portfolios are groups of individual woven and digitally printed designs, instead of coordinated textile collections. They are divided into two groups according to the aesthetics and qualities. Furthermore, the section gathers feedback about the textile idea portfolios from the textile professionals.

This thesis provides knowledge of the interior textile industry, trends and textile brands' preferences in fabric aesthetics and qualities by examining literature, online articles and websites. Additionally, it analyses textile professionals' interviews, describes the textile design process and offers new woven and digitally printed designs to Lodetex's collection.

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**Keywords** interior textiles, textile brands, curtain fabrics, Lodetex, jacquard weaving, industrial textile manufacturing

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### Tiivistelmä

Suuri osa sisustuskankaiden suunnitteluun liittyvästä luovasta työstä tapahtuu tekstiilitehtaissa, koska työ on teknisesti haastavaa. Tämän takia kutomojen tekstiilisuunnittelijoilla on huomattava vaikutus tulevien kangasmallien ulkonäköön ja laatuun. Sisutustekstiilibrändeissä kehitetään viimeisteltyjä tekstiilimallistoja valitsemalla ja muokkaamalla kankaita kutomojen tekstiilikokoelmista.

Tämän käytäntöön perustuvan, “practice-based” opinnäytteen tarkoitus on tutkia seikkoja, joita tekstiilisuunnittelija pohtii kehittäessään kevyitä julkutiloihin ja etenkin hotellikäyttöön suunnattuja verhokankaita, kun kankaat on suunnattu keski- ja huipputason tekstiilibrändeille useilla maantieteellisillä markkina-alueilla.

Opinnäytteen taustatutkimus esittelee sisustustekstiilialan toimijat ja tekstiilien tuotantovaiheet, koska niiden vaikutus sisustustekstiilien esteettisiin ja laadullisiin vaatimuksiin täytyy ymmärtää. Lisäksi taustatutkimus avaa trendien vaikutusta verhokankaisiin ja esittelee niiden ennustamiseen keskittyvän toimialan. Lopuksi esitellään valikoidut tekstiilibrändit Pohjois-Euroopassa, Iso-Britanniassa ja Yhdysvalloissa ja tarkastellaan tekstiilibrändien eroja ja yhtäläisyyksiä.

Opinnäytteen luova, verhokankaiden suunnitteluun keskittyvä osio on kehitetty yhteistyössä italialaisen kutomon Lodetexin kanssa. Osio kertoo suunnitteluprosessista ja esittelee kevyistä verhokankaista koostuvat ideaportfoliot, jotka on suunnattu Lodetexin asiakkaille Pohjois-Euroopassa, Iso-Britanniassa ja Yhdysvalloissa. Ideaportfoliot eivät ole viimeisteltyjä kangasmallistoja vaan kangaskokoelmia, jotka koostuvat yksittäisistä kudotuista ja digitaalisesti painetuista kangasmalleista. Ne on jaettu kahteen osaan estetiikan ja kangaslaadun perusteella. Suunnittelutyön ja prosessin avaamisen lisäksi osio kerää palautetta ideaportfolioista tekstiilialan ammattilaisilta.

Opinnäyte tarjoaa tietoa sisustuskankaiden teollisuusalalta tutkimalla kirjallisuutta, verkkojulkaisuja ja –sivustoja. Lisäksi opinnäytteessä analysoidaan tekstiilialan ammattilaisten haastatteluja, kuvataan ideaportfolioiden syntyyn vaikuttanutta luovaa prosessia sekä tarjotaan uusia kudottuja ja digitaalisesti painettuja kankaita Lodetexin mallistoon.

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**Avainsanat** sisustustekstiilit, tekstiilibrändit, verhokankaat, Lodetex, jacquard-kudonta, teollinen tekstiilituotanto

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# Table of Contents

<b>1. Introduction</b>	<b>11</b>
1.1. Background and Collaboration	12
1.2. Research Question and Objectives	13
1.3. Methods	14
1.4. Positioning and Previous Work	15
<b>2. Background Research</b>	<b>17</b>
2.1. Interior Textile Industry	18
→ Interior Textiles for Different Purposes	18
→ Significant Actors in Interior Textile Industry	18
2.2. Trends in Interior Textile Industry	23
→ Development of Trends in Interior Textile Industry	23
→ Trend Forecasting	24
2.3. Differences and Similarities Between Textile Editors' Taste and Style	27
→ Findings from Textile Professionals' Interviews	27
→ Case Study: Textile Editors in North Europe	30
→ Case Study: Textile Editors in the UK and the USA	34
→ Findings from Case Studies	38
2.4. Summary: Background Research	39



<b>3. Design Case: Designing for Textile Editors in Various Geographic Market Areas</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>3.1. The Design Process</b>	<b>43</b>
→ Design Process Background and Collaboration with Lodetex	43
→ Inspiration: Moodboards, Colours and Materials	45
→ Ideation and Sketching Process	48
→ Fabric Production: Colour, Material and Technical Choices	52
→ Prototyping, Developing and Finishing	54
<b>3.2. Idea Portfolios</b>	<b>57</b>
→ Metallic Light / North Europe	58
→ Organic Imperfection / The UK and The USA	66
<b>3.3. Feedback &amp; Reflections</b>	<b>74</b>
<b>4. Conclusion</b>	<b>77</b>
<b>5. References</b>	<b>79</b>
→ Image References	81
<b>Appendix</b>	<b>83</b>



Figure 1. Design 41406 V3 from the idea portfolio



# 1. Introduction

**This thesis examines the differences between various textile editors'<sup>1</sup> styles and preferences in fabric features. The intention of this practice-based thesis is to create textile idea portfolios<sup>2</sup> of woven and digitally printed lightweight curtain fabrics for contract-residential<sup>3</sup> purposes aimed at various medium-high level<sup>4</sup> textile editor companies in North Europe, the UK and the USA.**

**In practice-based research, an artefact, in this case the idea portfolios of lightweight**

**curtain fabrics, will gain new knowledge as an outcome of the design practice.**

**In practice-based research, it is important to document the outcomes of the practice to understand the significance and context of the study (Candy 2006, 3).**

**The textile idea portfolios are developed in collaboration with the Italian weaving mill Lodetex and the division into two groups is made according to the textiles' aesthetics and material qualities.**

1 Interior textile brands are commonly called as textile editors. Textile editors are presented more widely in the Background Research.

2 As a weaving mill, Lodetex rather creates individual textile designs than coordinated fabric collections. Therefore, the textile the idea portfolio in this thesis refers to the group of individual textile designs instead of coordinated textile collection.

3 Textiles for example for hotels, also referred to as hospitality purposes. The meaning will be explained more detailed in the Background Research.

4 Fabrics for medium and top, even for luxurious purposes, such as deluxe hotels, restaurants etc.

## **1.1. Background and Collaboration**

The idea for this thesis developed during a 5-month internship at an Italian weaving mill Lodetex (from October 2016 to February 2017), which is specialized producing industrially woven and digitally printed lightweight curtain fabrics.

During the internship, I learned essential insights of textile designer's work in a weaving mill. Freedom designing and developing woven and printed fabrics without many restrictions and exploiting the materials and the colours in Lodetex's stock was a wonderful opportunity.

At the time two technicians took care of the basic, plain fabrics and the designer's and the design intern's responsibility was creating new designs and fabric qualities with special features. I developed a few customer requests, but mostly concentrated on creating new ideas for Lodetex's collection keeping in mind Lodetex's and their customers' taste and style. I created multiple woven and digitally printed textiles, which were presented to different customers at two textile fairs, Heimtextil in Frankfurt, Germany in

January 2017 and Proposte in Cernobbio, Italy in May 2017.

During the internship, I discovered that a textile designer was expected to recognize notable differences in the textile editors' styles and preferred fabric features between different geographic market areas. Identifying the differences, however, was difficult, which raised my interest and encouraged me to continue exploring the topic.

After the internship, I discussed the possibility of the master's thesis with the design director Valentina Molteni and the sales manager Luca Farhanghi. We agreed that I would concentrate on creating new ideas for textiles, aimed at their textile editor customers in North Europe, the UK and the USA. These areas were selected, because the customers' styles and fabric feature preferences appeared different from each other. Furthermore, North Europe is already an important market area for Lodetex, whereas their clientele in the UK and in the USA is not as wide. Reviewing and comparing the styles and the needs of their customers gave me an interesting starting point for the thesis.

## 1.2. Research Question and Objectives

The goal in this thesis is to gain knowledge about the textile industry and the aspects influencing the textile editors' styles and fabric feature preferences.

To achieve the goals, this thesis will investigate the following research questions and sub-questions:

- What are the main factors influencing the interior textile industry and the medium-high level textile editors' taste and style, when focusing on lightweight curtain fabrics for contract-residential purposes?
- How do the textile editors' styles and preferred fabric features differ in the selected geographic market areas, in North Europe, in the UK and in the USA?
  - Are there similarities in the taste and style between the textile editors in the selected geographic market areas?
- What does the designer need to take in consideration while designing for the textile editors in various geographic market areas?
- How do the textile idea portfolios developed for this thesis, suit the textile editors' taste and style in the selected geographic market areas?
  - What are the textile editors' main concerns in selecting fabrics for their collections?

In order to answer the research questions, I set the following objectives:

- Gather information about the textile industry and textile editors by exploring professional literature, articles and websites and by interviewing the textile professionals.
- Analyse the styles of the selected customers of Lodetex (Kvadrat, Sahco, Romo and Robert Allen) through case studies.
- Examine the differences and similarities of the various textile editors' taste and style in the selected geographic market areas.
- Create the idea portfolios of lightweight curtain fabrics aimed at the various textile editors in the selected geographic market areas.
- Compare the idea portfolios with the results of the interviews and the case studies.
- Gather feedback about the idea portfolios from the textile professionals.

### 1.3. Methods

The study is divided into two sections, Background Research and Design Case. The first section, Background Research focuses on examining the aspects affecting the interior textile industry. It is based on three email interviews, three personal discussions with textile professionals and examining literature, online articles and websites. The second section, Design Case, introduces the visual inspiration of the textile idea portfolios, uncovers the ideation, design and production process of the lightweight curtain fabrics, presents two textile idea portfolios and gathers feedback about the fabrics from textile professionals.

I received the email interviewees' contacts at Lodetex. The intention was interviewing textile professionals from the selected market areas to discover their views of the textile editors' and geographic market areas' taste and style differences and similarities. I email interviewed Johanna Apelgren, a textile engineer working at Kvadrat and Nicole Frei, a textile

designer working at Sahco. I did not manage reaching any interviewees from USA although I received a few contacts from Lodetex. However, I email interviewed Adrian Adams, a managing director from Weavers Gallery, which is a textile agency based in the UK, whose largest customers are international textile editors and wholesalers such as Prestigious Textiles, SMD, Ashley Wilde, Harlequin and Villa Nova.

Furthermore, I discussed the topics with Luca Farhanghi, the sales manager at Lodetex, Davide Bonsignore, the export manager at Lodetex, Valentina Molteni, the design director at Lodetex and with Maarit Salolainen, who is a professor at Aalto University and works as a creative director and a textile designer, currently for a Turkish weaving mill Vanelli. Furthermore, I presented the textile idea portfolios and discussed them with Tiina Ventelä, a contract sales manager, working at a Finnish textile editor Lauritzon's.



## **1.4. Positioning and Previous Work**

Textile editors rather focus on assembling coordinated textile collections than designing individual fabrics and therefore, the responsibility of the woven textiles' visual and technical creation transfers to the textile designers working in weaving mills.

Weaving mills are often specialized producing distinguishable styles and qualities of fabrics, targeted at various textile editors. Therefore, a textile designer, working in a weaving mill, needs to understand the characteristics of the different market areas, consider the style and taste of their company and the preferences of the various textile editors while keeping in mind the fabric features and the price.

Although the textile editors have distinctive styles, similarities between the companies based on the same geographic market areas appear. On the contrary, textile editors based on different geographic market areas, appear having contrast in their styles. Furthermore, the preferences of the textile editors transform continuously, and trends are strongly connected to the development.

The characteristics of the interior textile market areas are researched in previous master's theses in Aalto University. Maija Fagerlund's thesis (2006) concentrated developing woven interior fabrics for textile editors in the USA and it was developed in collaboration with an Austrian weaving mill Backhausen. Mariia Elizarova's thesis (2015) gathers information about the contract-residential market and a collection of woven fabrics was developed in collaboration with Backhausen. Aoi Yoshizawa's thesis (2014) concentrates on the contract textile market, and a collection of upholstery and hanging fabrics was created in collaboration with a Swedish weaving mill Svensson.

Furthermore, there are other theses developed in collaboration with Lodetex concerning lightweight curtain fabrics. The thesis of Tiina Paavilainen (2015) concentrates on fil coupé fabrics, using the technique as a source of inspiration and the thesis of Petra Haikonen (2016) researches the qualities of acoustic curtain fabrics.



Figure 2. Design 41399 V8 from Organic Imperfection idea portfolio

## 2. Background Research

The purpose of the Background Research is to examine the aspects affecting the interior textile industry and the medium-high level textile editors' taste and style when focusing on lightweight curtain fabrics for contract-residential purposes.

The first section introduces the significant actors and production phases in the interior textile industry to understand their influence on the textile editors' taste and style. The process from the fiber until the fabric, and sales of the consumer product is long, and value is added in every phase of the industrial process (Gale & Kaur, 2002: 121).

The second section reviews trends' effects in the interior textiles and introduces the trend forecasting industry. Furthermore, it searches for differences and similarities between various textile editors' styles and preferred fabric aesthetics and material qualities by presenting selected textile editors, Kvadrat and Sahco based in North Europe, Romo in the UK and Robert Allen in

the USA. These textile editors operate internationally and manage various brands or collection lines. The companies were selected, because they are Lodetex's customers, and despite being international, they have distinctive styles.

The purpose of the background research is to examine the following questions:

- *What are the main factors influencing the interior textile industry and the medium-high level textile editors' taste and style, when focusing on lightweight curtain fabrics for contract-residential purposes?*
- *How do the textile editors' styles and preferred fabric features differ in the selected geographic market areas, in North Europe, in the UK and in the USA?*
- *Are there similarities in the taste and style between the textile editors in the selected geographic market areas?*

## 2.1. Interior Textile Industry

There are several actors and production phases in woven interior textile's lifecycle, from fiber and yarn production until the fabric's end usage all affecting interior fabrics' aesthetics and material qualities. This section presents the interior textile manufacturers, businesses and end users to understand their influence on the interior textile industry.

### Interior Textiles for Different Purposes

Interior fabrics can be divided into contract, residential and contract-residential<sup>5</sup> textiles according to their function and place of usage.

Contract textiles, the textile materials for public environments (Tortora & Merkel, 1996: 133), need to meet strict quality requirements, concerning for example durability, weft density, flame-retardancy, lightfastness and hygiene, because of their usage in public places like hospitals, schools and offices. Contract textiles are often made of flame-retardant polyester, for example Trevira CS or other synthetic materials with various textile coating finishings.

Residential textiles do not need to meet as strict requirements as contract textiles because their usage in private houses where the safety and durability requirements are not as high as in the contract market (Elizarowa, 2015: 34). Therefore, the requirements for residential textiles are more flexible, and the fabrics can be made of mixtures of synthetic and natural materials, or purely out of natural materials such as linen, cotton and wool.

Contract-residential textiles position themselves between contract and residential fabrics. They are intended for places which remain somewhere between a public and a private place (Salolainen, 4.9.2018). The most evident example of the contract-residential market is hotels, where the textiles need to meet the safety and durability requirements while offering an intimate and comfortable atmosphere for their changing guests.

Furthermore, the usage purpose of the interior textile, e.g. upholstery or hanging fabric, affects the quality requirements of the textiles. Upholstery fabrics need to meet higher quality requirements and demand more testing than hanging fabrics i.e. curtains.

### Significant Actors in Interior Textile Industry

#### Yarn Brands and Producers

Many manufacturers in the textile industry are concentrated on specific part of the textiles' production process. Yarns are often developed by yarn brands e.g. Trevira or Lurex (Salolainen, 4.9.2018). The yarn brands are recognized for specific fibers and yarn qualities, which are produced at various fiber and yarn mills. Those mills are likewise specialized producing specific fiber and yarn qualities. Many of the known yarn brands are Italian or Turkish (ibid.).

Trevira is known for their Trevira CS flame-retardant polyester yarns, which are widely used in interior fabrics. During the last 15 years Trevira has developed different qualities of flame-retardant polyester yarns, which resemble natural materials such as linen, wool or other fibers. Trevira has a strong influence on how the interior fabrics look today. Recently, an Indian brand Recron, has started to pro-

<sup>5</sup> Contract-residential market is also called as hospitality market.

duce flame-retardant yarns for interior fabrics and has become a competitor for Trevira, especially in India but also in other countries. (Salolainen, 4.9.2018.)

The yarn brands and producers develop yarns in different colours, twist fibers together in various ways, and create yarns with special effects, e.g. thermoplastic yarns, which shrink or harden in high temperature. Sometimes a yarn is an innovation itself and gives endless ideas for its users at the weaving mill and might work as a starting point for a new fabric trend. One of the most important yarn and fiber fairs in Europe, Filo, is organized twice a year in Milan, Italy (Salolainen, 4.9.2018).

### Weaving Mills

The weaving mills order yarns from the yarn brands and producers in different materials, colours and effects. Likewise yarn brands and producers, weaving mills are often concentrated producing specific fabrics, for example in upholstery or curtain fabrics for the contract, residential or contract-residential market. For example, an Austrian company, Backhausen, concentrates producing upholstery fabrics and Casalegno Tendaggi from Italy, is specialized in curtains and upholstery (Salolainen, 4.9.2018).

Due to the technicality of the woven designs, weaving mills are increasingly in charge of the textile design work. The creative team at weaving mill develops new ideas and designs which are presented to the textile editors and other customers. The most important places for presenting the textiles are the textile fairs, such as Heimtextil in Frankfurt, Germany or Proposte in Cernobbio, Italy.

Weaving mills do not typically create coordinated textile collections; the fabrics are presented to the textile editor companies, which assemble, market and distribute coordinated textile collections. A few weaving mills, especially in India or other parts of Asia, additionally create coordinated textile collections, which are marketed directly to the end users. By working that way, the weaving mills earn more profit. However, they must be careful not to compete with their textile editor customers. (Salolainen, 4.9.2018.)

European weaving mills have their biggest competitors in Turkey, China and India, which pushes the European mills to invest in special materials and innovations to survive in the industry. According to Luca Farhanghi (19.3.2018), the weaving mills in Asia are often bigger than their European competitors. Those weaving mills must work efficiently and produce large volumes of fabric using their existing stock of yarns. The strength of large companies is that they often have the whole production process from the fiber and yarn production to the fabric finishing at their weaving mill (Salolainen, 4.9.2018). However, the advantage of smaller weaving mills is the flexibility in their production process; it is easier to provide design service for the customers, keep a large variety of yarns in stock, change the looms if needed, and produce smaller amounts of customized fabrics (Farhanghi, 19.3.2018).

## Lodetex

Lodetex is an Italian weaving mill based in Busto Arsizio, which has more than 50 years of experience in the textile industry. It has a staff of 35 people working in different phases of the textile production: taking care of textile design, weaving and digital printing machinery, textile dyeing and finishing, quality control, warehouse and marketing. Being able to control the production process prevents mistakes and makes the whole process more reliable. (Lodetex, 2018.)

Lodetex is specialized in sheer, lightweight curtain fabrics for furnishing, such as organza and voile, which are mainly made of flame-retardant polyester Trevira CS. Lodetex has 50 looms, part of them are dobby and leno looms and part of them are jacquard looms. (Lodetex, 2018.) Dobby looms enable weaving small structures with basic weaves, such as plain, twill and satin weaves. Leno weaves have warp yarns that do not lie parallel, but are in pairs, with one yarn crossed over the other before filling yarn is inserted. The criss-crossed yarn gives greater strength than plain weaves and allows for an open, lace-like fabric. (Jackman, Dixon, Condra: 2003, 99.) Jacquard looms enable weaving more complex structures with the possibility to weave multicoloured patterns with up to

8 different colours. Lodetex's looms are different widths, from 150 cm to 340 cm. In addition to lightweight curtain fabrics, they produce also medium weight fabrics and a few heavier qualities. (Lodetex, 2018.)

Lodetex has a digital textile printer and a possibility to piece dye fabrics (Lodetex, 2018). They have almost all the textile finishing possibilities at the weaving mill, but e.g. *fil coupé*<sup>6</sup> fabrics are cut at a textile finishing company Vibe Cimatura.

Lodetex operates in a medium-high level market mainly in Europe, but it has growing number of customers around the world (Lodetex, 2018). It sells fabrics for European textile editors e.g. Kvadrat, Kinna-sand, Sahco, Zimmer + Rohde, Rubelli and Création Bauman but also customers in the UK, e.g. Romo group, Osborne & Little and Harlequin and in USA, e.g. Robert Allen, Carnegie and Maharam.

The main aim of Lodetex is to focus on the quality and flexibility of the textile production. Lodetex provides services for their customers in design and design development, sampling and production. (Lodetex, 2018.)

6 A fabric, which is designed and woven with yarn floats. The intension is to cut the yarn floats after weaving, to achieve special looks, for example a contrast between a see-through and solid surface.





Figure 3. Lodetex weaving mill

### Textile Finishing Companies

Textile finishing companies operate closely with weaving mills. They are often specialized in fabric finishings e.g. clipping the fil coupé fabric, washing the fabric in different ways, printing, finishing *de-voré*<sup>7</sup> fabrics, and coating the fabrics. The fabric finishings e.g. soften the fabrics, improve fabrics' draping or create new features, such as fringed look.

In large weaving mills, all the fabric finishing possibilities are inside the mills and only some specific finishings might be externalized (Salolainen,

4.9.2018). However, in Europe, the finishing companies are still common, but they are situated beside the weaving mills to facilitate the collaboration.

### Textile Agents and Converters

Textile agents operate between the textile manufacturers and the textile editors and the other actors in the interior textile field. According to Adrian Adams (14.5.2018) from Weavers Gallery textile agency, agent's role is to secure orders for the weaving mills, which they represent, and to support their sales process. Agents also deal with rejected goods and chase customer invoices for payment. Agent's customers are textile editors and other textile suppliers. In addition to textile agents, the textile converters operate in between the textile manufacturers and textile editors. Textile converters are individuals or organizations that buy large amounts of raw fabrics and sell them as finished products to textile editors and other actors in the interior textile industry (Tortora & Merkel, 1996: 134).

<sup>7</sup> A fabric or lace made with two different fiber types with a pattern effect produced by destroying one of the yarns in a printing process that employs chemicals instead of colour. Brocaded effects are obtained on velvet by printing with a chemical that will destroy the pile and leave the ground unharmed, and part of the ground in lace may be burned out (burn-out lace). Used largely for dress goods and curtain fabrics. (Tortora & Merkel 1996: 81.)

A textile agent or a converter is an expert in their represented market area. Weaving mills work with textile agents or converters if the weaving mill's potential customers are for example located on the other side of the globe or they wish reaching new customers from the market areas, which are not familiar to them.

### Textile Editors

The interior textile brands are called as textile editors. Textile editors work closely with different weaving mills, textile agents and converters to create coordinated collections for their customers in contract, residential and contract-residential markets. A descriptive definition for a textile editor could be a designing fabric distributor (Salolainen, 4.9.2018). Textile editors have their own design teams, but they mostly purchase finished designs from weaving mills and assemble them as coordinated collections. Textile editors exhibit and visit textile fairs to find new customers and manufacturers. Interior textile editors create one to two collections each year (Molteni, 9.5.2018).

Textile editors manage several brands or create various collection lines to please different customers around the world. The editors in medium-high level market mostly collaborate with the interior architects and architects who select the fabrics e.g. for the new hotels, restaurants or hospitals. Also, textile editors occasionally represent other editors from different market areas, e.g. Indian editors often represent well-known European editors in India (Salolainen, 4.9.2018).

Well-established textile editors based in North Europe are for example Sahco, Jab and Zimmer + Rohde, which are based in Germany and Kvadrat, which is based in Denmark. Romo, Clarke & Clarke, Harlequin and Colefax & Fowler are recognized textile editors based in the UK and Robert Allen, Maharam and Carnegie are based in the USA.

### The End User

*“Each residential and commercial consumer has a unique set of criteria governing the selection of textile end products. Some of these variables relate to appearance and tactile characteristics; some focus on service-related performance; some are concerned with maintenance and installation; some relate to environmental impact; some pertain to human health issues; and some are necessarily determined by cost factors.” (Willbanks & Oxford & Miller, 2014: 28)*

The end user of the interior textile, the textile editor's customer in a medium-high level interior textile market, is often an architect or an interior architect and occasionally a private consumer.

The end users consider several aesthetic or sensory characteristics in the selection of interior textiles, such as colour, line, texture, and form, and design principles such as emphasis, rhythm, contrast, and harmony. Although the visual impact of a textile is a primary concern, the effects of end-use lightning on the apparent colour, the availability of matching items, and the life expectancy of the fashion features have a remarkable influence in the decision-making process (Willbanks & Oxford & Miller, 2014: 29).



## 2.2.

# Trends in Interior Textile Industry

*“However, what many fail to understand is that design is an ever-evolving field that ultimately acts as a reflection of society. As the fabric of society changes, so does design.” (Muratovski, 2016: 18)*

As I progressed in the design process, I realized that textile editors' taste and style preferences were strongly affected by trends. As Vejlgaard (2008: 187) points out: Trends are important to businesses, because changes in style and taste play an important role in product development, and because whether they like it or not, brands are affected by trends.

Taste is associated to beauty and its opposite, deformity (Lloyd Jones, 1991: 3). Taste is connected to the social class and cultural background, and it is partly constitutional (ibid.: 10-12). It is an area where the views of the majority are frequently in disagreement with the so-called experts (Lloyd Jones, 1991: x). A style is a distinctive manner, aesthetic, method or way expressing something 'new' (in design, fashion, architecture), while a trend is the 'direction' in which something new or different moves (Raymond, 2010: 14).

In this section, I refer to taste as the textile editors' internal preferences in selecting textiles to their collections, to style as the external preferences; how the textile editors want their customers to see and understand their collections, and to a trend or a fashion trend as a phenomenon, which creates the changes in taste and style.

This section reviews the development of interior textile trends and introduces the trend forecasting industry. The intension of this section is not to present the current or the future trends, but rather introduce the phenomenon and investigate the general patterns affecting the textile editors' differences and similarities in style and taste.

## Development of Trends in Interior Textile Industry

The development of trends is a complex process and there are several aspects affecting the formation of changes. According to Vejlgaard (2008: 20), *“it often seems that the exact opposite of an existing popular or mainstream style is the starting point for a new trend.”*

Vejlgaard (2008: 9) writes that style and taste undergo two types of changes; one of these is short term, while the other is long term. The changes in interior trends are slower than for example in fashion, because the investments in interior textiles are typically large, the interior textiles need to meet the quality requirements and they are expected to last longer than fashion products.

*“In the field of interior, people are not as keen on change as they are with fashion. If you buy an expensive sofa, you want it to be ‘in style’ for a long period.” (Apelgren, 15.5.2018)*

According to Luca Farhanghi (19.3.2018), the sales manager at Lodetex, two to three trend colours change yearly in interior textile industry, but some trends or styles can influence the industry for years or even for decades. He gives an example about Dedar, an Italian textile editor, which has used a specific turquoise in their collections already for six or seven years, and yet it remains fresh. Davide Bonsignore (19.3.2018), export manager at Lodetex, mentions that interior textile design companies are always one to two years behind the fashion companies. Adams (14.5.2018), a textile agent from Weavers Gallery, claims, that for example the textile editors and other

retailers try to bring in different looks with more multicolour prints in one year as opposed to the last years, but the general market is consistent from year to year. Adams (ibid.) gives an example of the high-level interior textile market, where plain velvet is consistent along with heavy embroideries because of their valuable looks.

Salolainen (4.9.2018) believes that interior collections stay relevant for 3 to 5 years, and sometimes up to 10 years. The patterns and colours from the fashion catwalks reach the interior textile industry faster than before, but the trends adopted from fashion world are stable and last longer than a season.

### Trend Forecasting

To spot trends, many of the textile professionals use trend-forecasting material, which is created by the forecasting companies (Kim & Fiore & Kim, 2011: 2). According to Raymond (2010: 12), trend forecasters are lifestyle detectives, who spend their time detecting patterns or shifts in attitudes, mindsets or lifestyle options, that run against current thinking or how people normally behave, live, dress, communicate and trade.

Fashion change is influenced by various factors, such as social, cultural, economic, and technological factors. Therefore, anticipating fashion trends is not a simple task, and forecasters need to consider numerous forces that may affect fashion change. Fashion forecasting is a creative, continual process used to predict the trends of upcoming seasons. It also involves a systematic procedure, including information gathering, market and consumer research, and anal-

ysis. Major companies are increasingly dependent on trend forecasting and subscribe to materials from more than one forecasting company. (Kim & Fiore & Kim, 2011: 18.) The basic tools for forecasting use a mix of skills that are practical, process driven and intuitive (Raymond, 2010: 120).

*“Forecasting companies observe emerging trends that originate around the world and gather information through interviews with major visionaries in design, art, music, architecture, culture, politics, technology, and marketing. Forecasting firms also look at subcultural influences, consumer lifestyles and preferences, and demographics. Integration and analysis of information from these various sources allow forecasting companies to predict future direction for fashion.” (Kim & Fiore & Kim, 2011: xiv)*

Textile forecasting websites and magazines give advices on colour, material effects, weights, textures, concepts and consumer markets (Gale & Kaur, 2002: 134). Different actors in the textile and fashion industry exploit the trend forecasts in colour, fabric, and silhouette to develop or buy products for upcoming seasons. (Kim & Fiore & Kim, 2011: xiv.) However, Salolainen (4.9.2018) mentions that companies with their own creative teams are aware of the trend forecasts but consciously avoid following them, to preserve the company’s identity and ability to design something unique.

Trend books, catalogues, trade publications and international yarn and fabric fairs inform the textile professionals about prevailing trends.

*“The trend book can be extravagantly illustrated and larger than life, informing clients through selected text, visuals, fabric and colour chips, fibers, yarns and material samples.” (Gale & Kaur, 2002: 137)*

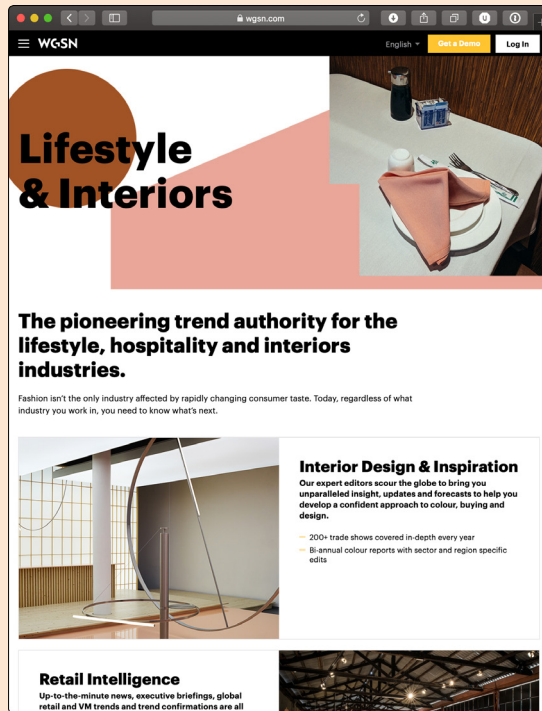


Figure 4. Screenshot from WGSN Website

## WGSN

WGSN is an online trend library, founded in 1998 in London, which is specialized gathering information and publishing reports about lifestyle, interior and fashion trends. With over 250 trend forecaster and data scientists globally, WGSN helps businesses stay relevant and find their growth opportunities by providing inspirational material, collecting and analyzing retail data and consumer brand perceptions, gauging what's trending with consumers and organizing summits and seminars. (WGSN, 2018.)

WGSN has divided the data into different categories under the main subjects Lifestyle & Interior and Fashion. Lifestyle & Interior gathers information about future trends, trade shows and retailers. Also, it has more specific categories under the topics Design & Inspiration, Lifestyle and Interiors. Fashion side presents future trends, catwalk analysis and colours and likewise it has more specific categories under Design & Inspiration, Retail and Fashion Categories. (ibid.)

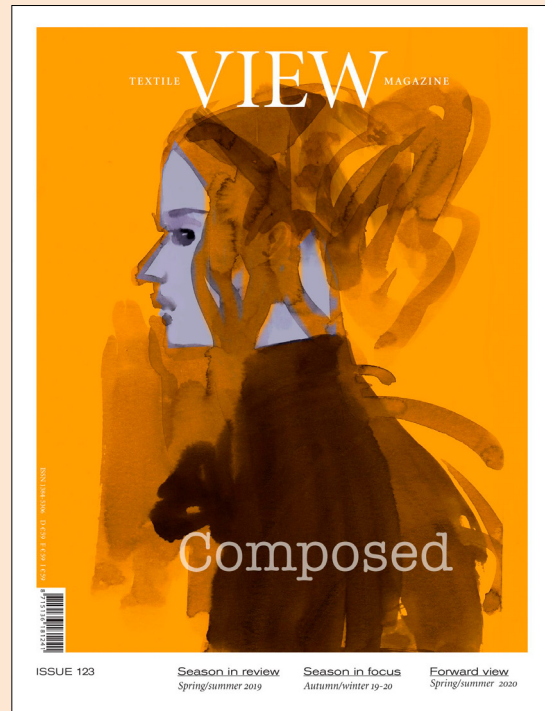


Figure 5. Textile View Magazine Issue 123

## View Publications

View Publications is a B2B trend magazine and book publisher, which publishes five different trend publications: Textile View Magazine, Viewpoint Design, PantoneView Colour Planner, View Two and Viewpoint Colour. The company was founded in 1988. (View Publications, 2018.)

Textile View Magazine is a trend forecasting magazine, whose target readers are the yarn or fabric buyers, the garment or knitwear stylists and manufacturers and major retail distributors involved in private-label production. The other magazines and books concentrate on different specific trend forecasting areas, such as colour, different areas of design and fashion, architecture, beauty, media and marketing etc. (ibid.)

## Pantone

Pantone is a company founded in 1963, which focuses creating colour selection tools and colour forecasting material. Pantone provides a universal language of colour for designers and producers to define, communicate and control colour from inspiration to realization. (Pantone, 2018.)

Pantone produces digital and physical colour specifications and tools for graphics, fashion and product design. Also, it provides customized colour standards, brand identity and product colour consulting as well as trend forecasting inclusive of Pantone Colour of the Year, Fashion Runway Colour Trend Reports, colour psychology and more. (ibid.)

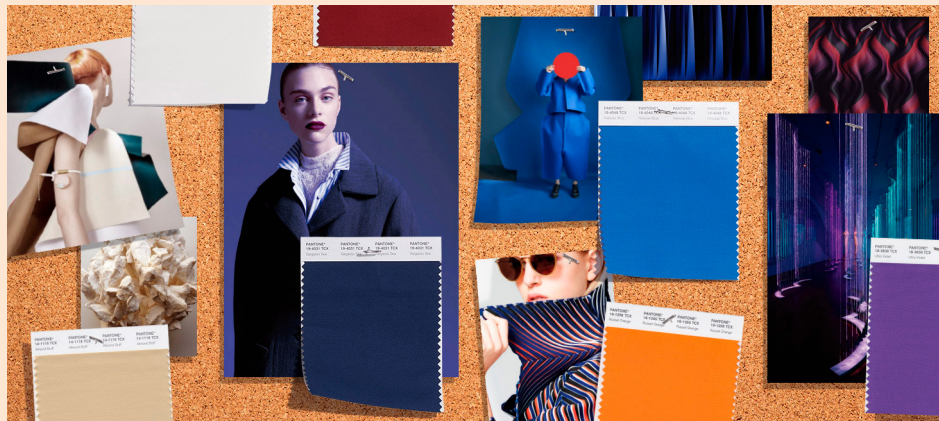


Figure 6. PANTONEVIEW Colour Planner Autumn/Winter 2018/19

## 2.3. Differences and Similarities Between Textile Editors' Taste and Style

The world is turning globalized and the local differences regarding taste and style disappear or unify. Many of the current textile editors operating in medium-high level market are international and create several collections directed to their customers in different market areas, because none of them can survive in a single geographic market area (Farhanghi, 2018).

Nevertheless, differences between the interior textile editors taste and style in different geographic market areas appear. By interviewing the textile professionals and comparing the selected textile editors' styles in case studies, this section will highlight the possible differences and similarities in lightweight curtain fabrics' aesthetics and material qualities. The case studies review the selected textile editor companies, Kvadrat, Sahco, Romo and Robert Allen and examine their fabrics and products through their websites.

### Findings from Textile Professionals' Interviews

As mentioned previously in the introduction, I received the email interviewees' contacts during the thesis production process at Lodetex. The aim was to reach textile professionals from the selected market areas to discover their opinions and knowledge about the textile editors' styles and fabric feature preferences.

I email interviewed Johanna Apelgren, who works as a textile engineer at Kvadrat and Nicole Frei, a textile designer working at Sahco to examine the knowledge and opinions of the textile professionals based in North Europe.

Furthermore, I email interviewed Adrian Adams, a managing director from Weavers Gallery textile

agency, based in the UK, since a textile agent has a wide knowledge of different textile editor companies and other actors in the textile industry. Weavers Gallery represents various textile mills from India, Italy and Turkey and their largest customers are international textile editors and wholesalers such as Prestigious Textiles, SMD, Ashley Wilde, Harlequin and Villa Nova. Additionally, they supply fabrics to textile editors such as Designers Guild, Colefax & Fowler and Romo Group and deal with the retailers such as John Lewis, Marks & Spencer, Laura Ashley and Next. All their customers are based in the UK and Ireland, although the wholesalers sell all over the world.

Moreover, to receive insights of the interior textile industry from the weaving mills' perspective, I discussed with Luca Farhanghi, the sales manager at Lodetex, Davide Bonsignore, the export manager at Lodetex and Valentina Molteni, the design director at Lodetex. Additionally, I consulted and discussed with Maarit Salolainen, who is a professor at Aalto University and works as a creative director and a textile designer, currently for a Turkish weaving mill Vanelli, to gain information from a textile professional with a wide experience in the textile industry.

I asked the interviewees, whether they considered the differences in preferred fabric features existing in the selected geographic market areas. Additionally, I requested them mentioning differences in taste, style and fabric qualities if possible. I divided my findings into three groups: 1. Colour and Pattern, 2. Fabric Weight and Quality and 3. History, Architecture and Climate.

### Colour and Pattern

Both Adams (14.5.2018) and Salolainen (4.9.2018) mention that colours are the biggest area of difference. For example, in the UK colours are very simple and the best sellers are naturals, beiges and greys. Popular colours now are pastel-like and soft in tone, with greyed off blues, greens and pinks. North America is much more into sludgy darker colours, whilst Northern Europe use more colour along with metallic type shades. (Adams, 14.5.2018.) Furthermore, Salolainen (4.9.2018) mentions that there is a prominent difference in the white colour that textile editors in different geographical market areas prefer. In North Europe the white turns into grey and blue and in southern and warmer areas, the white is warmer, more yellow.

Frei (21.5.2018) feels that there are differences in the textiles' usage, style and taste in the different geographic market areas. She recognizes a strong contrast in between the market areas in North Europe, the UK and USA, especially in colour usage but she cannot mention the exact differences. However, she points out that many customers' favoured colours in curtain fabrics are neutral and light, especially all the white tones.

Apelgren (15.5.2018) claims that style differences, such as characteristics according patterns, colours etc. are increasingly fading as taste transforms more global with technology. *"We read the same magazines, blogs and so on. We use Instagram and Pinterest and go to the same fairs."*

Adams (14.5.2018) gives an example of the change in the UK, where the traditional types of designs, such as damasks<sup>8</sup>, florals etc. are being replaced by more modern designs. Geometrics, multi-colours and plain fabrics are very strong in all areas of the market.

### Fabric Weight and Quality

According to Adams (14.5.2018) mainland Europe uses in general, lighter weight fabrics and the UK uses much heavier fabrics such as chenilles and velvets. Adams (ibid.) gives an example of the UK market, where the customers have traditionally used net curtains instead of blinds and heavier weight curtains to keep out the light and keep in the warmth. However, this has changed in the last 20 years and net curtains are not used as much and blinds are increasingly being used in homes.

In Johanna Apelgren's (15.5.2018) field of business performance specifications, the market area has a remarkable impact on the fabrics, which are chosen for projects. Due to the different fabric quality requirements in various countries and areas, Apelgren (ibid.) mentions, that for example, in USA the customers do not want flame retardant fabrics but in Europe the flame-retardant polyester, Trevira CS is a standard for large projects. Also, Apelgren (ibid.) mentions that hospitals in Denmark do not want to use antibacterial fabrics, but in Asia they are more interested in using them.

### History, Architecture and Climate

Additionally, the preferred fabric features depend on the architecture, history and weather of certain area. The geographic style and weight differences of curtains are not as large for example in globalized hotel chains. However, the differences still show clearly in smaller hotels and other places in the contract-residential market. (Salolainen, 4.9.2018.) Salolainen (4.9.2018) claims that designing collections with an identity, which represents the style of certain area, potentially brings more customers to the textile editors.

Johanna Apelgren (15.5.2018) mentions that at Kvadrat, they can point out that the needs of the customers are strongly affected by the climate: in warmer countries the customers do not want anything too thick and warm whereas in colder countries the fabric preferences are the opposite.

8 A woven patterned fabric, woven with one warp and one weft yarn.

## BACKGROUND RESEARCH

Furthermore, Salolainen (4.9.2018) mentions that the style differences are dependent on the textile editors' brand style, but simultaneously, the editors represent their country's or geographic market areas' distinctive style rather clearly. For example, a good example of German style, would be the style of the textile editors Zimmer + Rohde or Sahco, which is abstract, geometric and metallic, whereas in the UK the style is more detailed and narrative, good examples being Romo or Harlequin.

## Case Study: Textile Editors in North Europe

1

### Kvadrat

Kvadrat is textile editor based in Denmark, which was founded in 1968. Kvadrat produces contemporary high-quality textiles and textile-related products for architects, designers and private consumers to specify in public spaces and domestic interiors. Kvadrat consists of five different specialist brands: Kvadrat, Kvadrat/Raf Simons, Kvadrat Soft Cells, Danskina and Kinnasand. (Kvadrat, 2018.)

Kvadrat's style is influenced by the love for colour and the will to push technological and esthetical boundaries. Kvadrat's focus is on quality, which affects every decision from the exact tone of a red in a collection to the performance specifications. Kvadrat constantly renews their colour collections and values the simplicity in textiles, the precise and pure expression in their designs. (Apelgren, 15.5.2018.)

Kvadrat aims creating designs that achieve both a present and a futuristic look, without losing the company's historical origin (Kvadrat, 2018). Kvadrat works with different designers to give their collection a width, which would be very challenging to obtain with just an in-house design team. However, their in-house team is an important part of giving each collection the Kvadrat DNA. (Apelgren, 15.5.2018.)

According to Apelgren (15.5.2018), Kvadrat does not work with trends. Kvadrat has a 10-year warranty on all their textiles and they aim to design products, which are ageless. Apelgren mentions that one of their bestsellers is the first textile that they launched back in the 60's. Kvadrat's new fabrics often need some time to settle in the market.

*"As we do not compromise and do not focus on trends, we achieve a classic style with a twist as we are always looking ahead."* (Apelgren, 15.5.2018)

Kvadrat concentrates on curtains with special properties. For example, sheer curtains, which are sound absorbing, curtains with special light transmission/remission and black outs and dim outs etc. (Apelgren, 15.5.2018). Apelgren (ibid.) experienced that customers are quite conservative when it comes to curtains. Plain colours and plain constructions are the most popular qualities.

Apelgren (15.5.2018) mentions that inspiration at Kvadrat can come from everywhere, *"for example from a woven sample that sparks the imagination of one of their design coordinators, from a photograph on Pinterest or from a lovely wall colour in Milan."* Also, the in-house design team gets important inputs from the designers and the suppliers that they work with.



## BACKGROUND RESEARCH



Figure 7. Tritone, Kinnasand's Space Tunes collection 2018

### **Kvadrat**

Kvadrat's style could be described Scandinavian, minimalistic, yet colourful. Kinnasand is Kvadrat's brand, which is specialized in curtains.



Figure 8. Kinnasand's Tailor Made collection 2019



Figure 9. Kvadrat in use brochure, visual material

## BACKGROUND RESEARCH



Figure 10. Sahco collection autumn 2018

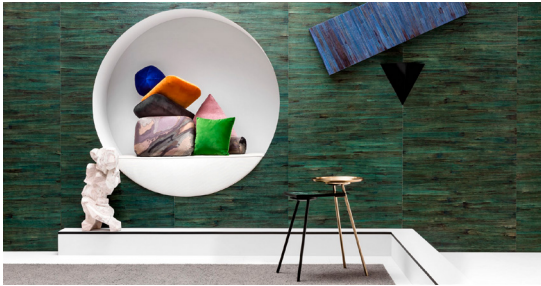


Figure 11. Sahco collection 2018



Figure 12. Sahco collection 2017

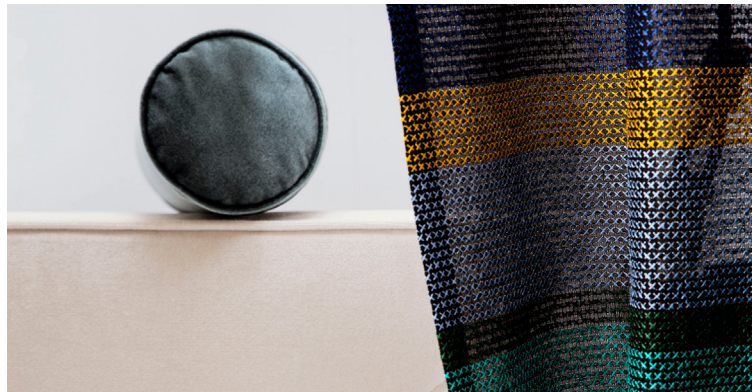


Figure 13. Sahco collection 2018

### **Sahco**

Sahco's fabrics appear luxurious. Many of Sahco's collections exploit strong colours and metallic effects.

## Sahco

Sahco is a high-level textile editor based in Germany which roots lead back to the year 1831. Sahco belongs to Kvadrat since 1st of May 2018. Additionally, Sahco represents the designers Ulf Moritz and Bruno Triplet. (Sahco, 2018.)

Sahco is known for its fabrics intended mainly for contract-residential purposes, which are described classic, contemporary or avant-garde (Sahco, 2018), but also for wallcoverings, rugs, accessories and home collections (Frei, 21.5.2018). Sahco creates two collections yearly with different product groups (ibid.), which combine casualness with elegance and sensitivity (Sahco, 2018). Nicole Frei (21.5.2018), a textile designer at Sahco, describes the style of Sahco being timeless, elegant, contemporary and all about details. Sahco produces fabrics for example for private houses, exclusive hotels, residences and castles, luxury yachts and even for some famous film sets (Sahco, 2018).

The creative team of Sahco works together with the marketing department to create their public appearance and collaborates with quality and purchase

department to ensure and register the articles in their system. Furthermore, they present the products regularly at workshops and fairs. (Frei, 21.5.2018.)

All Sahco's curtain fabrics are double-width and made of different material blends, not only of Trevira CS. All the fabrics have a special hand feel, for example soft or coarse, woolly or linen-alike and they are good to drape. Sahco develops plain and semi-plain fabrics and full repeated jacquard designs, which are always special in their composition, technique or finishing. (Frei, 21.5.2018.)

The creative team of Sahco gets inspiration everywhere. They follow closely the fields of fashion and interior, but also get inspiration for example from flowers blossoming in early spring. Some of Sahco's greatest inspirations are their creative suppliers' designs. (Frei, 21.5.2018.) According to Frei (21.5.2018), considering trends is inevitable, while considering the company's role in the textile field.

## **Case Study: Textile Editors in the UK and the USA**

3

### **Romo / Romo Group**

The founding brand of The Romo Group, Romo is an interior textile editor, which has its roots in Nottingham, England since 1902. In 1980's the company started its own in-house design studio and became the design-led brand as it is known today. Romo is based in Nottinghamshire, the UK and it has offices and showrooms in London, other parts of Europe and in the USA. Currently Romo Group consists of six different brands, which all have distinctive styles: Romo, Black Edition, Kirkby Design, Mark Alexander, Villa Nova and Zinc Textile. Each brand has their unique style and own design team. (Romo, 2018.)

Romo is known for their classic and contemporary designs and versatile plain fabrics, with timeless elegance and sophisticated colour palette. The founda-

tion of Romo brand is their long experience in the industry and distinctive British design. Romo launches new collections twice a year. The creative team considers carefully the colours and the designs of each collection, ensuring them to function in various places. They find inspiration from travelling, fashion, nature and outdoors among other things. Romo's in-house designers create the pattern and colour designs by hand before sending them to the weaving mills and printers to create the finished fabrics. (Romo, 2018.)

Romo supports the collection launches by creating inspiring marketing campaigns. Their products appear in magazines such as The World of Interiors, Elle Decoration, Homes & Gardens and House & Garden. (Romo, 2018.)



## BACKGROUND RESEARCH



Figure 14. Gardenia collection



Figure 15. Floris collection

### **Romo / Romo Group**

Many of Romo's lightweight curtain fabric collections present natural, light beige and grey colours but some of them also play with stronger colours and metallic effects.

The style of Romo varies depending on their various collections. Many of the collections exploit decorative patterns but also a few geometric designs.



Figure 16. Sesia collection



Figure 17. Floris collection

## BACKGROUND RESEARCH



Figure 18. DwellStudio Modern Drama collection



Figure 19. Color Library Glided Color collection



Figure 20. Window Library collection

### **Robert Allen / Robert Allen Durable Group**

Robert Allen's lightweight curtain fabrics appear having distinctive looks and usage of colours. In general, they exploit bold but decorative patterns and many muted tones of colours. Furthermore, they appear using a large amount of printed designs in their collections. However, a large part of the colours and materials used in the lightweight curtain fabrics appear natural, such as different beiges and greys.



Figure 21. DwellStudio Modern Drama collection

### **Robert Allen / Robert Allen Duralee Group**

Robert Allen is an American high-level interior textile editor founded in 1938 in Boston, which creates premium fabrics and luxurious furnishings for residential and contract-residential purposes. Robert Allen is part of Robert Allen Duralee Group, whose other brands are Beacon Hill and Duralee. Additionally, they have collaborated with brands such as DwellStudio and Madcap Cottage. (Robert Allen, 2018.)

The colour plays a large part in Robert Allen's design philosophy and designs are described relevant and timeless. Robert Allen is known for their fabric books, which are organized by colour. Their designs

are influenced by fashion, design, architecture and even pop culture. Furthermore, their creative team gets inspired by working with the weaving mills. (Robert Allen, 2018.)

Robert Allen creates several collections for different purposes and the fabrics are aimed at various customers around the world. They have a global network of showrooms, ground-breaking design services and a top distribution center. (Robert Allen, 2018.)

## Findings from Case Studies

The case studies strengthen the findings from the textile professionals' interviews. The selected textile editor companies have distinctive styles and differences between them appear, although all create several collection lines or manage various brands. The largest differences appear in their usage of material and colour.

The styles of the selected textile editor companies in North Europe vary but also contain similarities. Kvadrat represents the so-called Scandinavian style rather clearly whereas Sahco's style appears more German. Furthermore, these textile editors operate in slightly different areas as Kvadrat concentrates more on the contract textiles and Sahco on contract-residential textiles. However, Kvadrat creates collections also for contract-residential purposes. Nevertheless, there are similarities in the colour and material usage. Both Kvadrat and Sahco appear using relatively strong colours and technical materials, although Sahco develops more material mixtures than Kvadrat. Both companies' pattern designs are relatively geometric.

Likewise, the styles of the selected textile editor companies in the UK and the USA connect but also vary. Romo appears using lighter and brighter colours than Robert Allen, which uses more muted colours. However, the material usage appears similar; both companies use natural or natural-like materials and many of the designs and collections have a matt look. Furthermore, their usage of patterns appears similar; both exploit a variety of decorative and organic patterns but also a few geometric designs.

In general, the textile editors in North Europe appear using bright colours, metallic effects, technical materials and geometric patterns whereas in the UK and in the USA the materials and colours appear more matt and natural in their look and the patterns more decorative and organic.



## 2.4. **Summary: Background Research**

The background research provided information about the actors and the production phases in the textile industry and examined the trends influence in the fabric's aesthetic and material qualities. Furthermore, it investigated the differences and similarities between the various textile editors in the selected market areas.

The actors from the fiber and yarn producers until the fabric's end users, especially the textile editors, influence the lightweight curtain's aesthetic and material qualities. Additionally, many actors in the textile industry follow the trend forecasting websites, magazines and books to find inspiration, which influences the fabric features. The interior textile trends are influenced by fashion, although the trend development process is much slower in interior textile industry than in fashion industry.

Many of the interviewed textile professionals pointed out that there are differences between textile

editors' preferences in fabric aesthetics and qualities, although they also considered the world being so globalized that taste and style are unifying, and the differences are disappearing. They considered the biggest differences being in the colour usage and in the fabrics weight and quality. The patterns' aesthetics were considered being the most unified. Furthermore, they pointed out aspects that affect the differences, such as history, architecture and climate.

The case studies showed that many of the textile editors in the selected geographic market areas have their distinctive styles but at the same time they manage several brands or collection lines, which are directed to different market areas. Their brand image might communicate certain aesthetics although they offer various collection lines with different aesthetics and qualities.



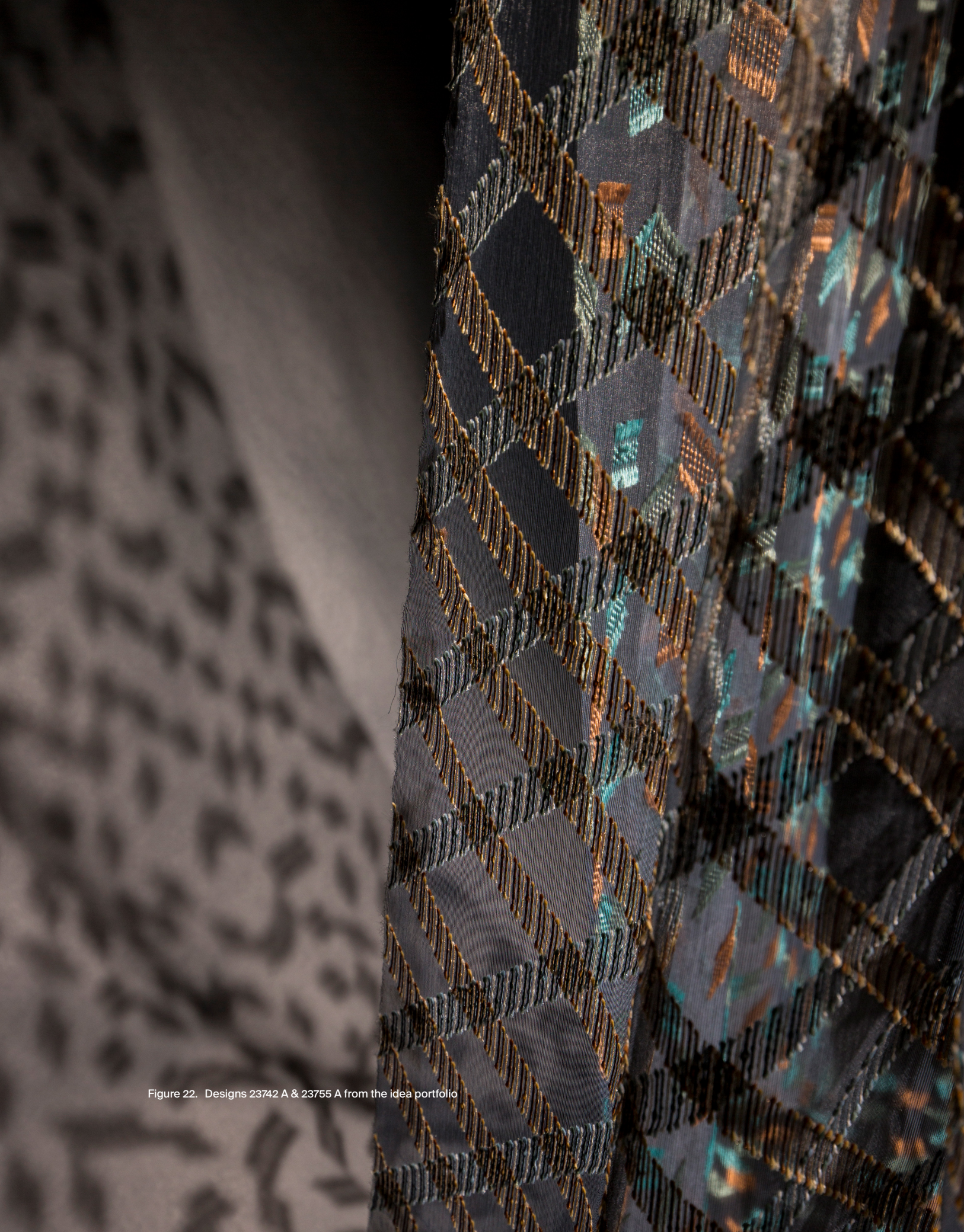


Figure 22. Designs 23742 A & 23755 A from the idea portfolio



### 3.

## Design Case: Designing for Textile Editors in Various Geographic Market Areas

A textile designer, working in a weaving mill, is required considering not only the taste and style of their company but also the needs of the company's customers, which are typically the textile editor companies. Textile designers' responsibility is developing new fabric qualities, patterns, colours and yarn combinations while considering the technical requirements and the price of the fabric by thinking about the yarn usage, textile bindings, the amount of colours and the density of the weft yarns.

This design case concentrates on developing two different textile idea portfolios of lightweight curtain fabrics for contract-residential purposes, directed to the medium-high level textile editors in North Europe, the UK and the USA. The reason for concentrating on woven and digitally printed fabrics is due to my background and interest in those techniques and the collaboration with Lodetex, which is specialized producing woven and digitally printed lightweight curtain fabrics. The goal of the design case is to understand the aspects that a textile designer needs to take in consideration while developing lightweight curtain fabrics for various textile editors in the selected geographic market areas.

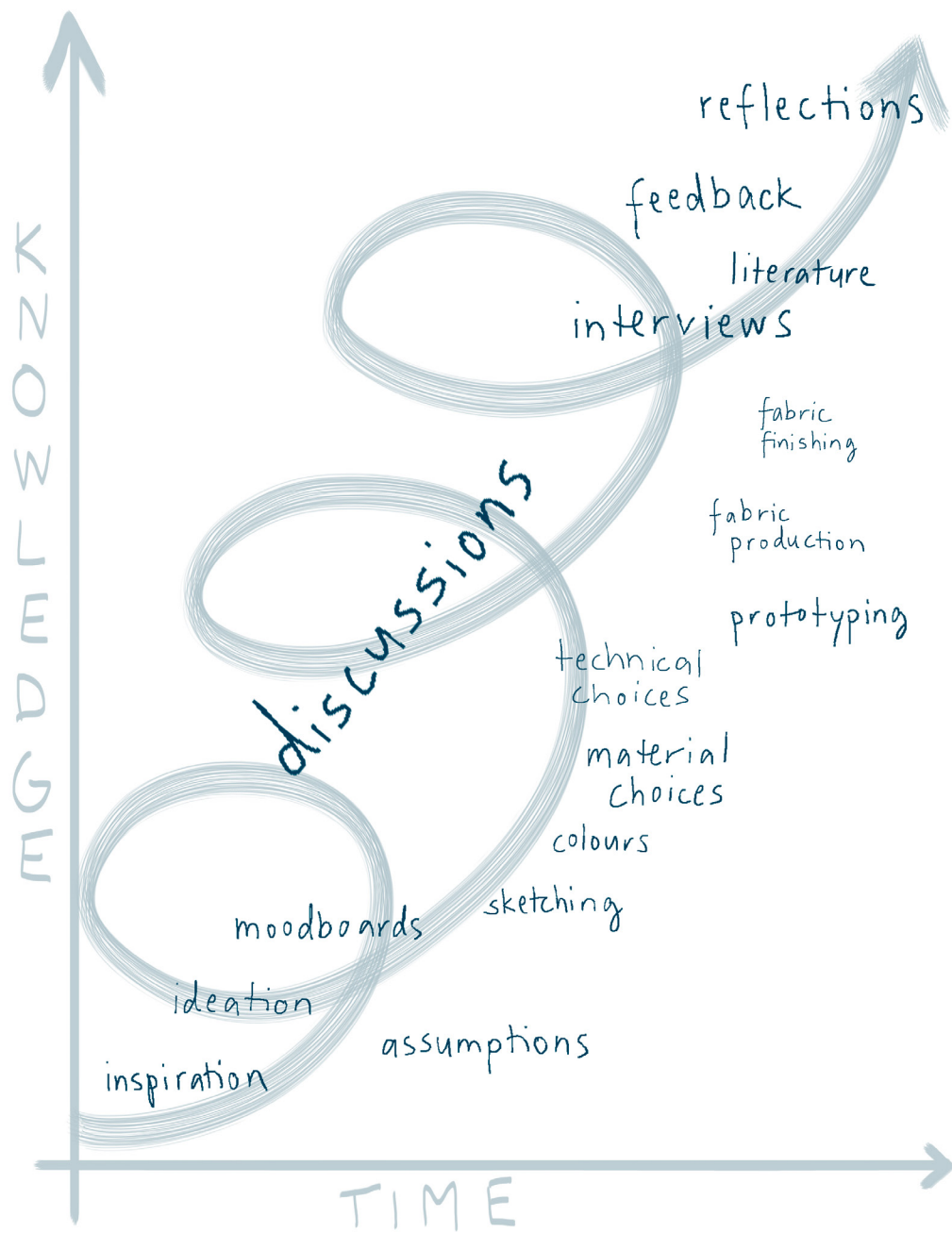
The first section presents the design process background and the textile design and production process at Lodetex.

It also introduces the moodboards, which worked as supporting tools in the design process. The second section uncovers the design process more specifically and introduces my assumptions of the textile editors' differences while developing fabrics for textile editors in North Europe, the UK and the USA.

Finally, the last section reviews the two different idea portfolios, which were developed at Lodetex, gathers feedback from the textile professionals and represents my own reflections. The idea portfolios are aimed at textile editors with different styles and fabric feature preferences and therefore divided into two parts according to their material qualities and aesthetics.

The practice-based design case examines the following questions:

- *What does the designer need to take in consideration while designing for the textile editors in various geographic market areas?*
- *How do the textile idea portfolios developed for this thesis, suit the textile editors' taste and style in the selected geographic market areas?*
- *What are the textile editors' main concerns in selecting fabrics for their collections?*



## 3.1. The Design Process

### Design Process Background and Collaboration with Lodetex

This thesis design process started in Finland during the early spring 2018. Because my knowledge of the textile editors' and geographic market areas' differences was not comprehensive in the beginning of the design process, I gathered information about the most influential and distinctive textile editors in North Europe, the UK and the USA by visiting their websites and reviewing their collections to gain an overview of the different fabric aesthetics and qualities. Meanwhile, I started gathering inspiring visual material.

After arriving in Italy, I discussed with Luca Farhanghi and Davide Bonsignore, the sales and export managers at Lodetex. The discussion gave me a few restrictions but also new ideas. Lodetex aims designing and producing innovative fabric designs. In previous years, they have concentrated developing new special techniques, whereas now their intention was to discover simple but inventive ways to create designs, which would appear valuable but also remain competitive in pricing. The discussion raised my interest in playing with the weft yarn order<sup>9</sup> in the woven designs creating special effects while saving in the material expenses.

Meanwhile, the creative team of Lodetex concentrated developing fabrics for Proposte textile fair, which was organized in May 2018. Therefore, the design director Valentina Molteni, requested me focusing on new fabric designs for Proposte. The assign-

ment appeared relevant because the textile fairs are the most important places for Lodetex to present their fabrics for the textile editor companies.

My stay in Italy was short and therefore, the process from the first ideas until the woven and digitally printed samples was fast-paced and hence I gained a realistic impression of the textile designer's job in a weaving mill.

Many people of Lodetex's staff helped me during the textile design and production process. During the internship, a textile designer Tiina Paavilainen, who worked at Lodetex at the time, taught me creating designs in EAT, the CAD<sup>10</sup>-program for designing woven fabrics. Having the CAD-program skills helped me significantly to start the design process for the master's thesis. During the thesis design process, I could ask for an opinion about my fabric designs' aesthetics and qualities from the art director of Lodetex, Valentina Molteni. Furthermore, the weaving and digital printing technicians helped me when I had questions about woven bindings and yarn densities or printing techniques and colours. Additionally, I received a few contacts for Lodetex's textile editor customers, which enabled the email interviews for my thesis.

<sup>9</sup> Explained more detailed in the section 3.1.4. Fabric Production: Colour, Material and Technical Choices.

<sup>10</sup> Computer aided design

## The Design and Production

### Process at Lodetex

As a weaving mill, Lodetex rather produces fabric collections, which consist of individual designs than coordinated fabric collections. Therefore, the creative team does not normally develop moodboards or use other tools helping in collection coordination. According to the design director of Lodetex, Valentina Molteni (9.5.2018), the creative team at Lodetex finds inspiration from various sources, for example from new yarns, from fashion catwalk shows, and from their clients' collections.

Lodetex usually works with trend forecasting websites, and a company called Carlin Group, which organizes conferences about the future trends. Occasionally Lodetex invests on the trend magazines and books such as Textile View Magazine. However, the textile fairs are the most important places for Lodetex to spot trends and present their fabrics. Lodetex exhibits yearly at least at two textile fairs, Heimtextil<sup>11</sup> and Proposte<sup>12</sup>, but Molteni (9.5.2018) believes that it is also important to visit and explore other fairs such as Maison Objet and Deco Off.

The time for collection building at Lodetex is normally short, around 3 months. In that time, the creative team must decide, which colours and materials they will concentrate on. However, the whole collection is dependent on the yarns and colours, which are available in stock. According to Molteni (9.5.2018), the creative team frequently cannot use the colours or the materials of their choice, because of the ongoing fabric production and new fabric orders. For example, in the spring 2018, Lodetex received an important order from a client for several yarn colours and therefore the creative team did not have a large variety of colours to select from.

Lodetex's fabric designs, which are presented at the textile fairs, mainly function as an inspiration for their customers, and are rarely sold without any adjustments. The textile editors and other customers are looking for a diversity of fabric features to fit their collections. The textile editors select fabric qualities or designs from Lodetex but might request changes in colours, materials or bindings.

11 Heimtextil is the largest international trade fair for home and contract textiles and it is organised yearly in Frankfurt during January. Heimtextil publishes a trend book each year, which is used by companies for spotting new trends and colours for their collections. (Heimtextil, 2018.)

12 Proposte is an interior textile fair organised yearly during May in Cernobbio, Italy, where more and more companies around the world are exhibiting while many of the exhibitors are still Italian (Proposte, 2018).



Figure 23. Moodboard development



Figure 24. Discarded Moodboards

## Inspiration: Moodboards, Colours and Materials

In the beginning of the design process, I collected inspiring visual material to concretize my thoughts and inspirations. During the internship at Lodetex, the architecture of Busto Arsizio, Italy, inspired me as it was a fascinating combination of old decorative buildings, art deco style and brutalism. Furthermore, I found inspiration from nature, colours and materials.

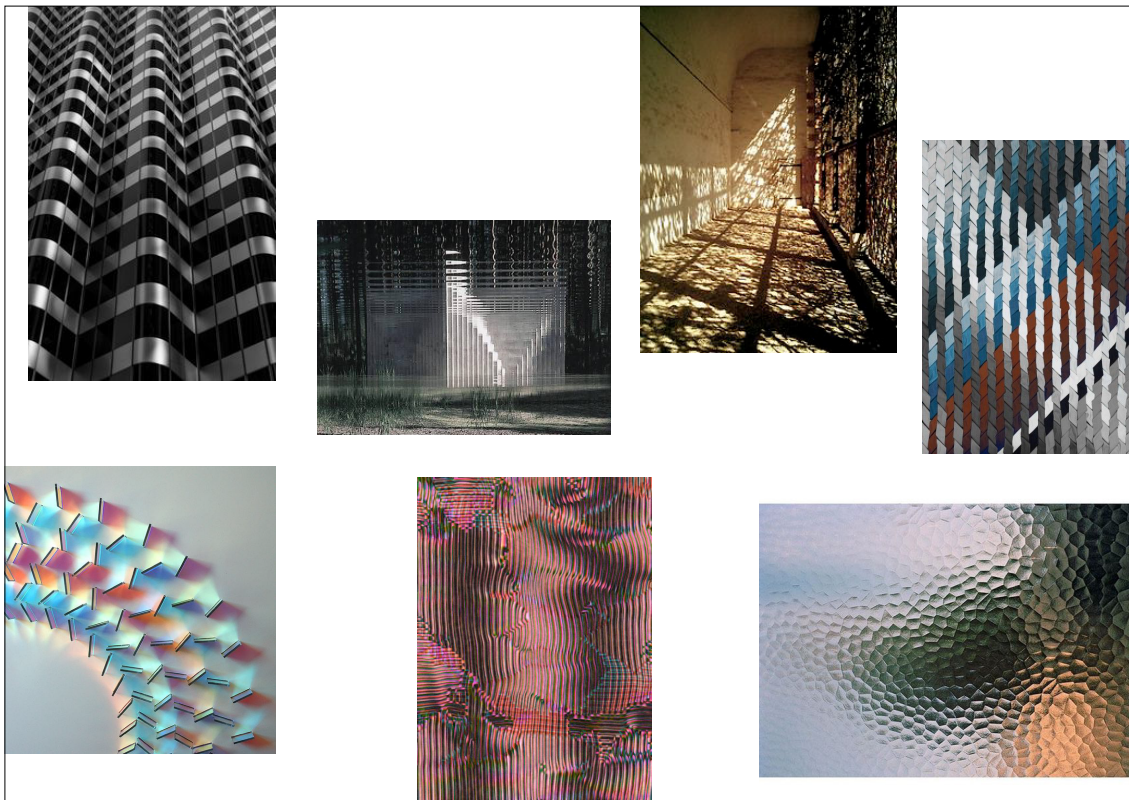
At first, I selected photos, colours and materials intuitively. As the design process progressed, I started consciously gathering and combining contrasting visual material into different moodboards, which

functioned as supporting tools to design a diversity of different fabrics directed to various textile editors in North Europe, the UK and the USA.

I changed and adjusted the moodboards through the design process, to maintain freedom and my own view, and to adapt the moodboards to Lodetex's needs. I created four different moodboards, which partly blended together during the design process and from which a few parts were left out. Finally, I decided continuing with two different moodboards, which also developed as the design process progressed. Defining the moodboards strictly did not appear important, because of my intension rather creating groups of individual designs than coordinated fabric collections.



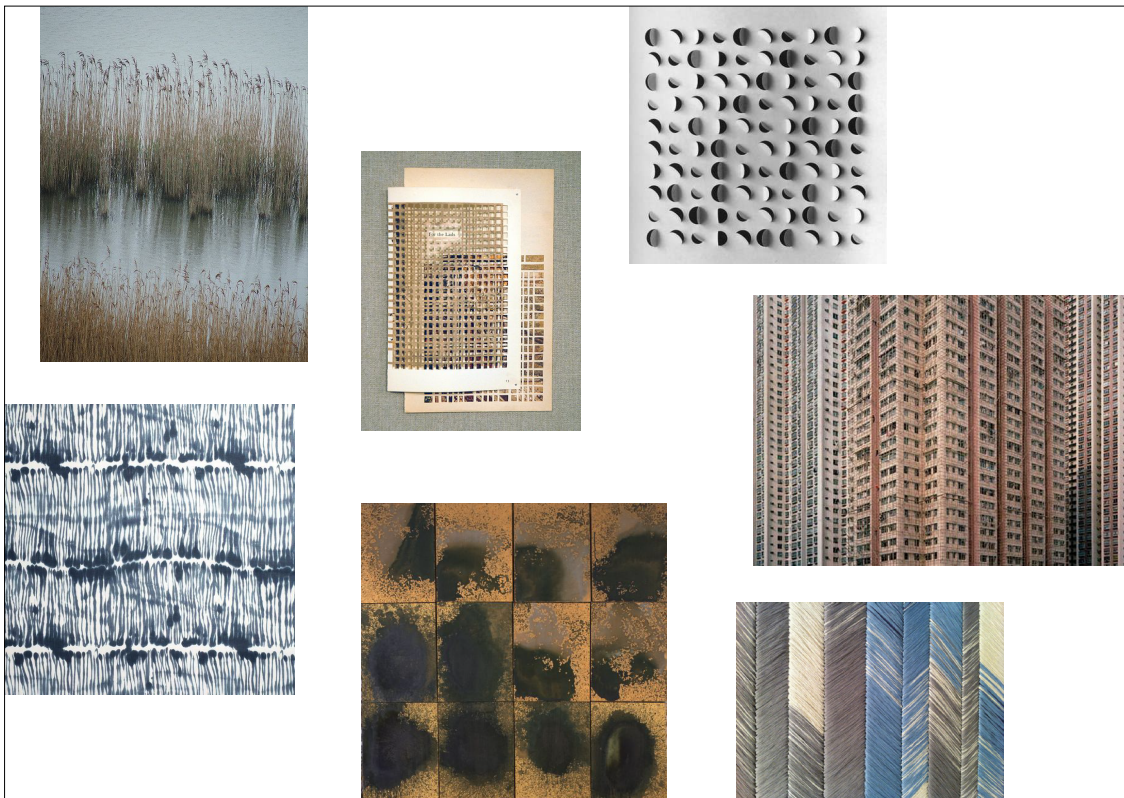
## DESIGN CASE



### **Metallic Light**

The inspiration for this moodboard arises from light and its different formations depending of the surface it hits. The combination of see-through and solid surfaces, contrasting colours and materials, glass, water, metal and shadows worked as my source of inspiration in this theme.

## DESIGN CASE



### **Organic Imperfection**

In this moodboard, the inspiration arises from the balance between imperfection, order and disorder. Nature, crafts, worn human creations, light colours and matt look play an important role in this theme. The moodboard aims to be playful but sophisticated.

## Ideation and Sketching Process

Window treatments, which I refer as curtains, are typically used as elements that dominate the otherwise simple interior or as elements that attract little attention in otherwise decorative interior (Willbanks & Oxford & Miller: 2015, 267). As I examined different textile editors' preferences in fabric features, my aim was to create visually impressive lightweight curtain fabrics, which distinguish from each other to reach a variety of textile editors in North Europe, the UK and the USA.

In the beginning of the design process, I formed assumptions of the geographic areas' taste and style differences, mostly about the Nordic countries because of my Finnish origin. However, my knowledge or assumptions were not strong about the other areas such as Germany and the Netherlands, which were considered being part of North European market at Lodetex. Furthermore, the fabric preferences in the UK and the USA were unclear to me.

I assumed North European style being minimalist and the style in the UK and in the USA more decorative. However, the fabrics' aesthetics considered being similar in the UK and in the USA surprised me. As I reviewed the textile editor companies through their websites and collection pamphlets, I noticed that in North Europe, the colours were relatively strong, the materials contained metallic effects, the patterns appeared geometric and the curtain fabrics looked very light and see-through. In the UK and the USA, the lightweight curtain fabrics' colours and materials looked more natural and the patterns more decorative. However, in all selected geographic areas, the textile editors appeared managing various collections lines with different fabric aesthetics and qualities. Nevertheless, I decided to concentrate on my findings in fabric differences to have a contrasting and defined starting point for my design process.

Furthermore, I examined current trends by browsing through Lodetex's trend forecasting material, such as their Textile View Magazines and the newest Heimtextil trend book. I also received a few colour

cards, which Lodetex's textile editor customers wanted to exploit in their collections. Additionally, the design director of Lodetex, Valentina Molteni concentrated on a few colours for Lodetex's Proposte fair collection. Therefore, I selected colours like turquoise, blue and shades of white, beige and brown for the designs, intent to the UK and the USA. In the fabrics aimed at the textile editors in North Europe, I decided to use stronger colours and yarns with metallic effects.

I received more information about the textile editors' preferences in textile features during and after my stay in Italy, for example as Johanna Apelgren (15.5.2018) mentioned, flame-retardant fabrics made of Trevira CS are almost a standard in North Europe but in the USA the customers do not want fire-retardant fabrics. Furthermore, Valentina Molteni mentioned, during one of our conversations at Lodetex, that the customers in the UK and in the USA are searching for natural looks and qualities, or Trevira CS qualities, which appear natural.

Additionally, I considered the weight of the fabrics, although my intention was to create lightweight curtain fabrics. I assumed the curtain fabrics in the UK and the USA being heavier than in North Europe and therefore I designed a few medium weight fabrics aimed at the UK and the USA.

I maintained freedom in the sketching process while considering all the discoveries about the textile editors' and the geographic market areas' differences. I created sketches in various ways: by cutting paper, painting and taking pictures. Furthermore, I prepared many of the sketches first roughly on paper and then on the computer. Because of the several technical restrictions in woven fabrics, the first idea and the sketch often developed and led into new ideas during the process of making the file on the computer.

Lodetex uses the CAD<sup>13</sup>-program called EAT, to design patterns and bindings for the fabrics. Although, the pattern repeat making in EAT is possible,

13 Computer aided design



## DESIGN CASE

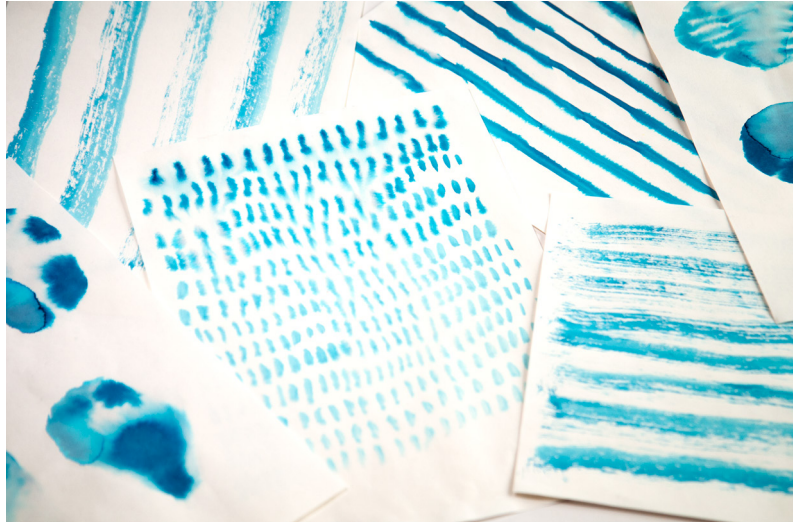


Figure 25. Painted sketches

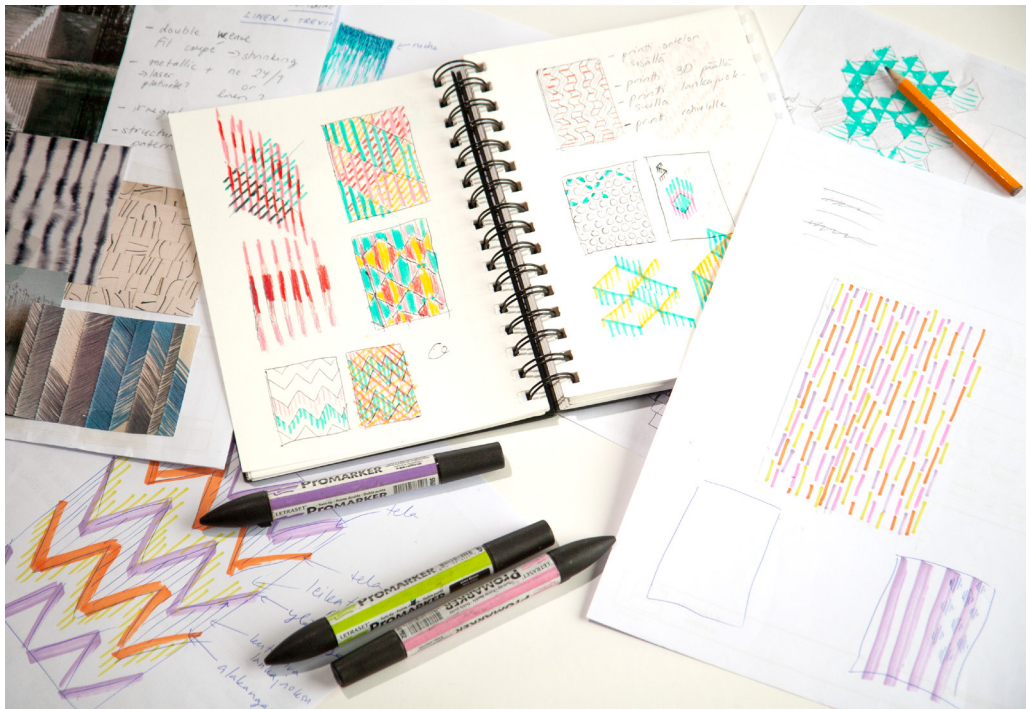


Figure 26. Sketching the woven ideas

## DESIGN CASE



Figure 27. Digital print sketch



## DESIGN CASE

I often designed the patterns in Photoshop and exported them to EAT, because Photoshop contains better tools for image layers and pattern making.

My ideas developed from the moodboards, colours, materials, bindings and the previous fabric designs of Lodetex. Also, the finishing possibilities of the fabrics gave me new ideas. During the sketching process, I considered the style of the design, the visual motifs that I used, the scale and the complexity of the pattern and the colours as far as I could.

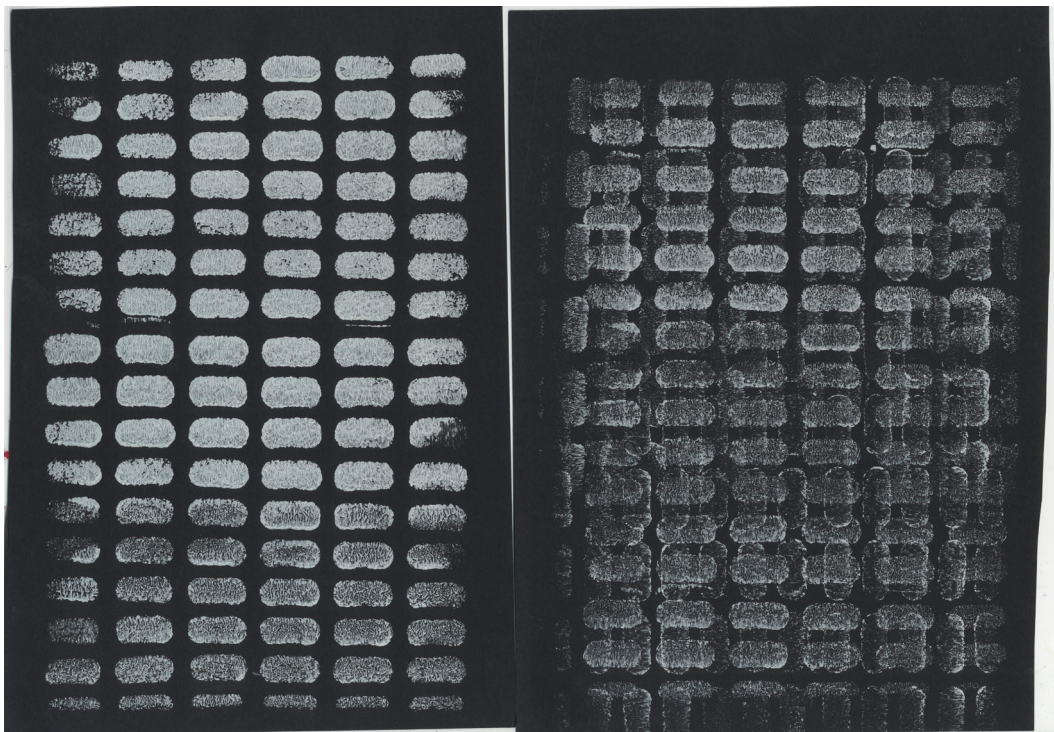


Figure 28. Digital print sketch

## Fabric Production: Colour, Material and Technical Choices

Fiber, yarn, and fabric features have a great impact on the appearance and serviceability of window treatments (Willbanks & Oxford & Miller: 2015, 267). Lodetex uses extremely thin and translucent Trevira CS as a warp yarn in many of their looms to be able to weave fabrics e.g. organza and voile. Also, they have a few thicker Trevira CS and linen looms. As weft materials in woven fabrics, they mainly use fire-retardant polyester Trevira CS and occasionally natural materials e.g. linen, wool and cotton. Natural materials are occasionally used in contract and contract-residential textiles if the bindings are carefully selected and the density of the warp and weft is high enough or the textile is coated (Salolainen, 4.9.2018). Additionally, e.g. wool is a naturally flame-retardant material and when it is mixed with right amount of other natural fibers, the fabrics can be used for contract and contract-residential purposes (Ventelä, 9.10.2018).

Since I focused on contract-residential market, I decided to create designs for Trevira CS looms, aimed at North Europe and for linen looms to achieve more natural qualities aimed at the UK and the USA. Furthermore, I designed a few Trevira CS qualities aimed at the UK and the USA, which resembled natural in their looks. As weft yarns, I chose mainly Trevira CS or other flame-retardant yarns. Additionally, I used a few linen and cotton wefts. The natural fibres are seldom used at Lodetex's own collection because of their high price, although it is possible to exploit them, e.g. if requested by a customer. I concentrated making designs on jacquard looms because of my ambition to create multicoloured, visually attractive fabrics.

The width of Lodetex's looms functions as the fabrics' height. Therefore, all the fabrics are designed horizontally, and the fabric is turned vertically after the weaving and finishing processes. Lodetex's looms are mainly weft based, which means that the fabric features are created by changing the weft yarns and using weft-faced bindings (Tortora & Merkel, 1996:

218). In warp-based looms, the fabric face and features are formed by playing with the warp yarns and warp-faced bindings (Tortora & Merkel, 1996: 620). Lodetex has a wide selection of weft yarns in different materials, colours and thicknesses. The thickest yarns, which are the most flamboyant and the most valuable, increase fabrics' special effects and features.

Playing with the weft yarns' order excited me as I was fascinated bringing more value to the fabrics by exploiting the thick, special yarns and a variety of colours while saving in material expenses. Additionally, I developed several *fil coupé* fabrics because of the technique's effect in the fabrics' look. However, cutting out part of the weft yarns is pricy and not sustainable. Therefore, I selected relatively basic, thin weft yarns as the base of the designs and added the thicker special yarns infrequently to minimize their usage and waste without affecting the aesthetics and the quality of the fabric. However, the materials or the colours of my choice were frequently not available, because of the ongoing fabric production or the new fabric orders, requiring me to compromise.

Tight warp and weft bindings are required for the extremely thin yarns to achieve strong fabrics. However, several thick, special yarns require looser bindings highlighting the yarns' aesthetics and qualities, but tight enough maintaining the fabrics' quality and strength. As I combined thin and thick weft yarns in my designs, I needed to consider both aspects while selecting the bindings. I experimented with different satin, lace, waffle and double-weave bindings and I created several *fil coupé* fabrics because of the possibility to play with the solid and see-through surfaces. The bindings are explained more detailed while presenting the idea portfolios.



Figure 29. Selecting the yarns



Figure 30. Selected weft yarns for weaving



Figure 31. Colour selection

### **Loretex's looms (2018), which I used for experimenting.**

#### 100 % TCS:

Starlight Black (black warp colour) & Starlight White (white warp colour): Grisú Dtex 22/1, 40 picks/cm, repeat size 2400 picks/60 cm & 13120 picks/328 cm

Sara Black (black warp colour) & Sara White (white warp colour): Grisú Dtex 22/1, 80 picks/cm, repeat size 2400 picks/30 cm & 4800 picks/60cm

EST 03 (white warp colour): Lucido 76/32/450 Dtex, 80 picks/cm, repeat size 2400 picks/30 cm

#### 100 % Linen:

Iris 1 (white warp colour) & Iris 2 (natural linen beige warp colour): Lino 1/26, 18 picks/cm, repeat size 2400 picks/133,33 cm

Viola 1 (white warp colour) & Viola 2 (natural linen beige warp colour): Lino 1/39, 24 picks/cm, repeat size 2400 picks/100 cm

Additionally, I developed a few designs on a new loom, which is a mixture of Trevira CS and wool.



## Prototyping, Developing and Finishing

At Lodetex, while developing the woven designs, the designer prepares the pattern, chooses the loom and the weft materials, colours, bindings and fabric finishings before weaving the design. Digitally printed designs are prepared for printing in Photoshop.

Especially while designing new qualities, it is hard to know how the fabric will look on the loom and after the finishing. However, instead of large prototyping process, the textile designer is expected to plan and prepare the design so that only some adjustments in weft density or changes in bindings are required.



Figure 32. Colour trial for woven design



Figure 33. Colour and material trial for woven design

### Lodetex's Finishings (2018):

Lodetex has several textile finishing possibilities at the weaving mill, making it possible to control almost all the textile production phases.

Purga = Washing of the fabric, temperature depends on the composition of fabric

Purga freddo = Cold wash of a fabric

Airo = Hand breaking, softening, opening fibers, done without water and often used for fabrics which contain linen

Airo con morbido = Hand breaking with softener and water, softer result than only using Airo, used for linen

Stiro = Steaming the fabric

Retrattile = Shrinking effect for the fabrics which contain shrinking yarns, 150°C – 160°C

Thermofix = Hardset finishing for fabrics which contain yarns that harden in the heat, 180 °C

Preparare x Stampa = Preparation for printing, ironing with steam, 200°C

Stampa + Retrattile = Preparation for a fabric which contains shrinking yarn and will be printed on the top of the surface 1. Printing 2. Fixing the colour on the fabric <170°C 3. Shrinking 185°C

## DESIGN CASE

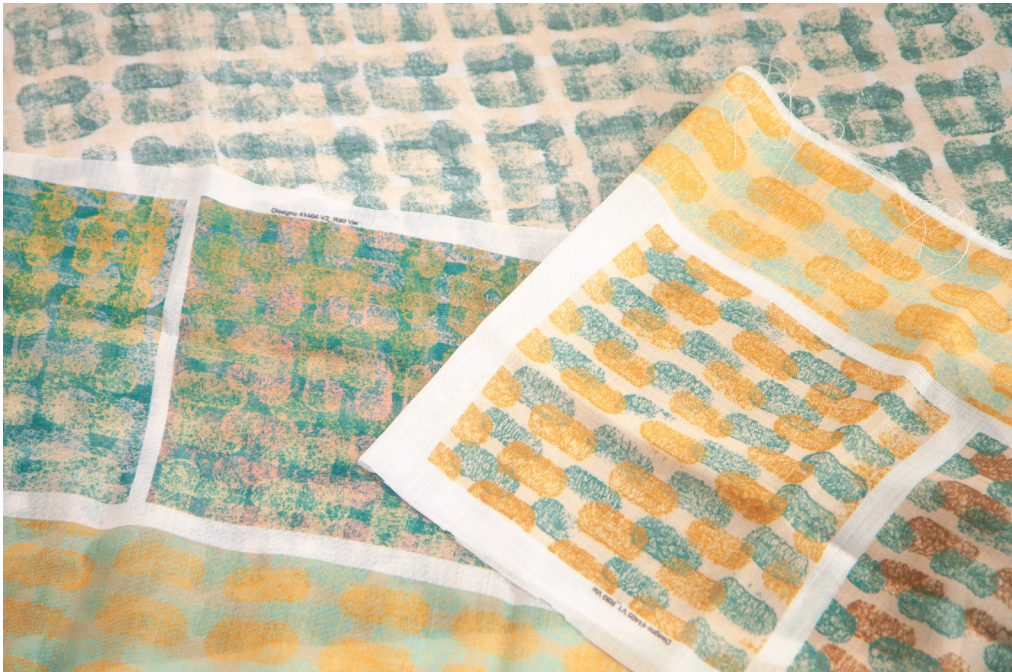


Figure 34. Colour trials for digital printing



Figure 35. Colour trials for digital printing





Figure 36. Fabrics from the Organic Imperfection idea portfolio





Figure 37. Fabrics from the Metallic Light idea portfolio

### 3.2. Idea Portfolios

The idea portfolios were developed in the beginning of the thesis process and therefore represent my assumptions of the differences between the textile editors.

## Metallic Light / North Europe

Figure 38.



### 23742 A

In this lightweight, see-through fil coupé fabric, I focused on playing with the weft yarn order, colours and bindings. Two crossing lines create a geometric design, where the line spacing varies creating an interesting surface. The base of the fabric is created by using two different, thin Trevira CS weft yarns. The crossing lines creating the pattern are different coloured and each line consists of a mixture of three different special weft yarns. The colours are chosen according to Lodetex's colours for Proposte 2018. Furthermore, I decided to exploit loosely twisted weft yarns which open when using loose bindings and mix them with thick cotton to create variation in the surface.

Material: Trevira CS, Cotton

Loom: Starlight Black

Figure 39.



### 23755 A

This lightweight fil coupé fabric is inspired by the embroidered surfaces and stained glass. The intention in the mid-scaled, geometric but disordered pattern, is to play with the colour and the fringe effects in a fresh and modern way. The loose bindings for the special, thick weft yarns highlight the metallic effect. The base of the fabric is similar with the design 23742 A.

Material: Trevira CS

Loom: Starlight Black



Figure 40.







Figure 41.



## Metallic Light / North Europe

Figure 42.



### 23746 A

The focus in this mid-scaled, lightweight, see-through fil coupé fabric was to exploit the lace<sup>14</sup> structure and experiment with the dégradé<sup>15</sup> effect with the special, thick and metallic weft yarns. The pattern is simultaneously geometric and creates a stripy effect. The golden yarns are elegant and flamboyant but neutral enough to suit many needs. The base of the fabric is created by using a weft yarn, which shrinks in 150°C -160°C. The shrinking wrinkles the special yarns, which creates three-dimensionality.

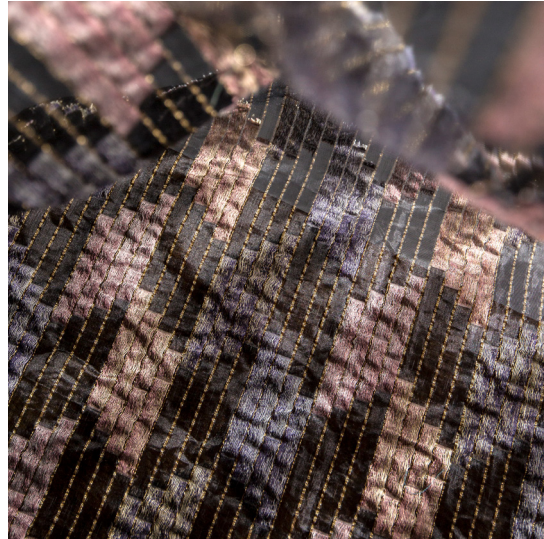
Material: Trevira CS

Loom: Starlight White

14 A broad term for novelty fabrics with open, lacy effects produced by various methods. (Tortora & Merkel, 1996: 315). The effect in this fabric is created by adding plain weave around the weft floats (inside the warp), which pushes the weft floats together.

15 Also called ombré. A colour effect with gradual changes in shade from light to dark or one hue to another (Tortora & Merkel, 1996: 394.)

Figure 43.



### 23747 A

This geometric design combines see-through base surface with three-dimensionality, which is created by using double weave<sup>16</sup> structure. The shrinking yarn in the backside of the double weave pockets, creates the three-dimensionality. I decided to use elegant but fresh colours in this design. The small stairs in the pattern design are inspired by architecture. Most of the weft yarns are Trevira CS, with a few linen wefts added bringing roughness and movement to the surface.

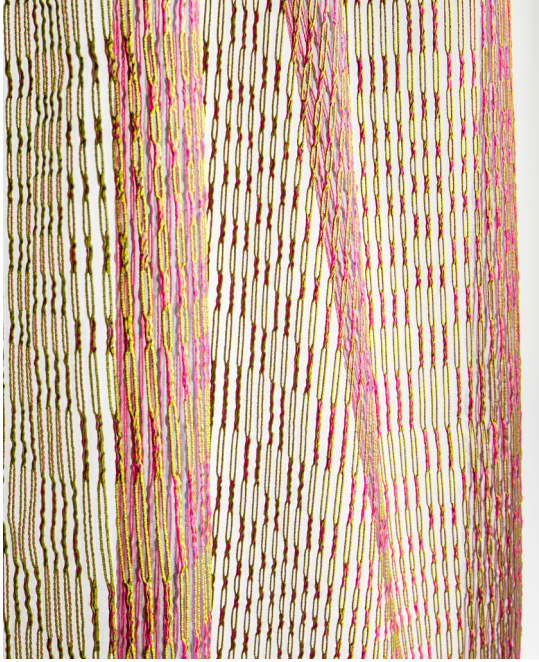
Material: Trevira CS, Linen

Loom: Starlight Black

16 A weave that employs two sets of warp or filling yarns arranged so that only one set appears on each side of the fabric (Tortora & Merkel, 1996: 181). Also called as pocket weave, because of the pocket structure that the two separate fabrics bound together create.

## Metallic Light / North Europe

Figure 44.



### 23748 B

The size of the square elements in this pattern varies, creating movement in the design. I exploited the lace structure and played with the weft yarns order. The combination of these effects transforms the pattern significantly depending on the lighting. The fabric is double-sided and opposite coloured on the different sides. The bright, contrasting colours emphasize the pattern and the binding effects. The base of the fabric contains shrinking yarns, which causes a slight wrinkling effect in the special yarns creating a more interesting surface.

Material: Trevira CS

Loom: Starlight Black

Figure 45.



### 23749 A

This fabric is inspired by the moiré<sup>17</sup> effect. The pattern is a modification of the design, which I created for the fabric 23748 B. The surface consists of infrequently added special yarns. Likewise, in the design 23748 B, I chose bright colours, although not as contrasting ones. The fabric is double-sided but both sides resemble similar. The base of the fabric contains shrinking yarns as in the design 23748 B.

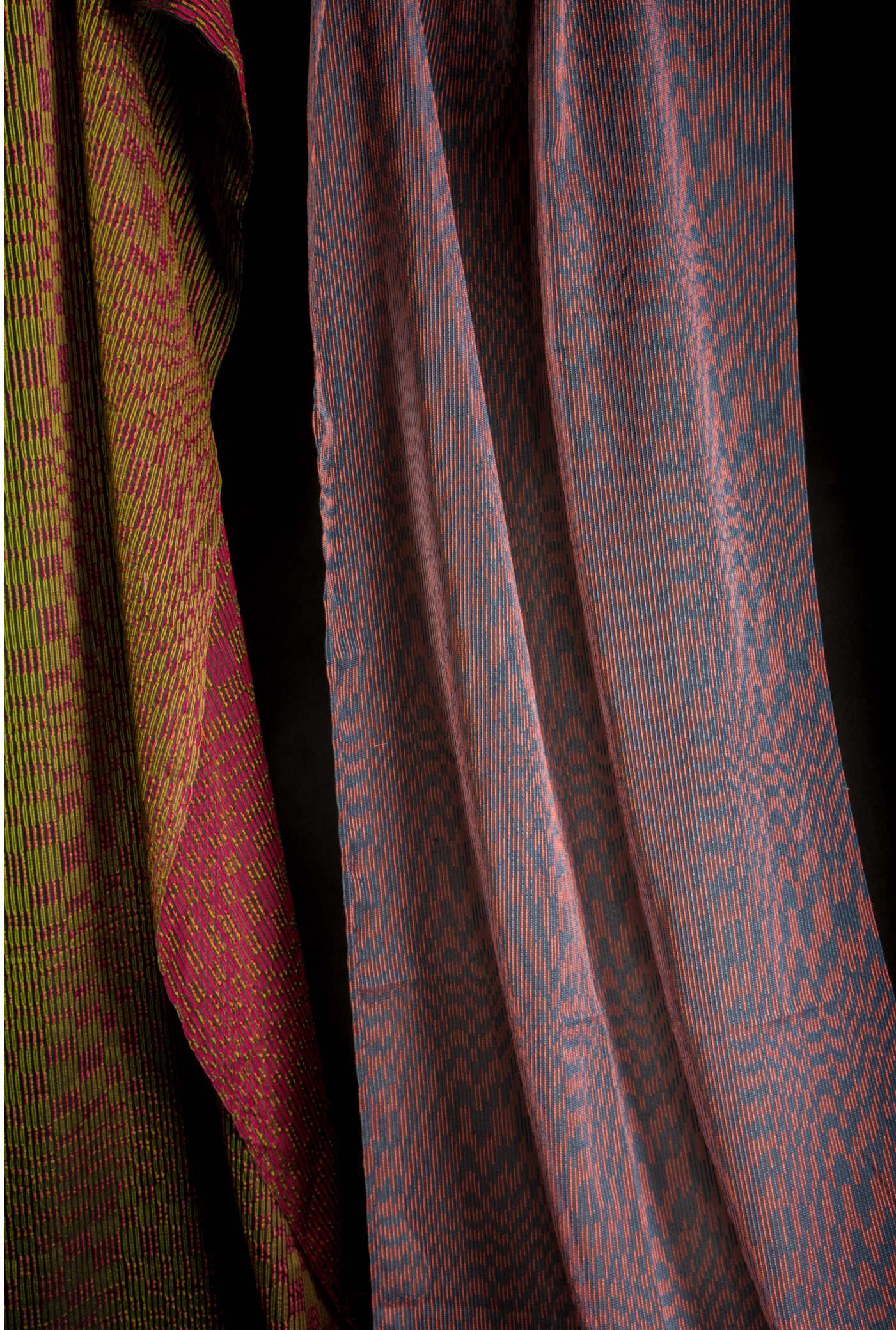
Material: Trevira CS

Loom: Starlight Black

<sup>17</sup> A watered effect on fabric, which is typically created by the finishing process (Tortora & Merkel, 1996: 365). The moiré look can be imitated in different ways.



Figure 46.





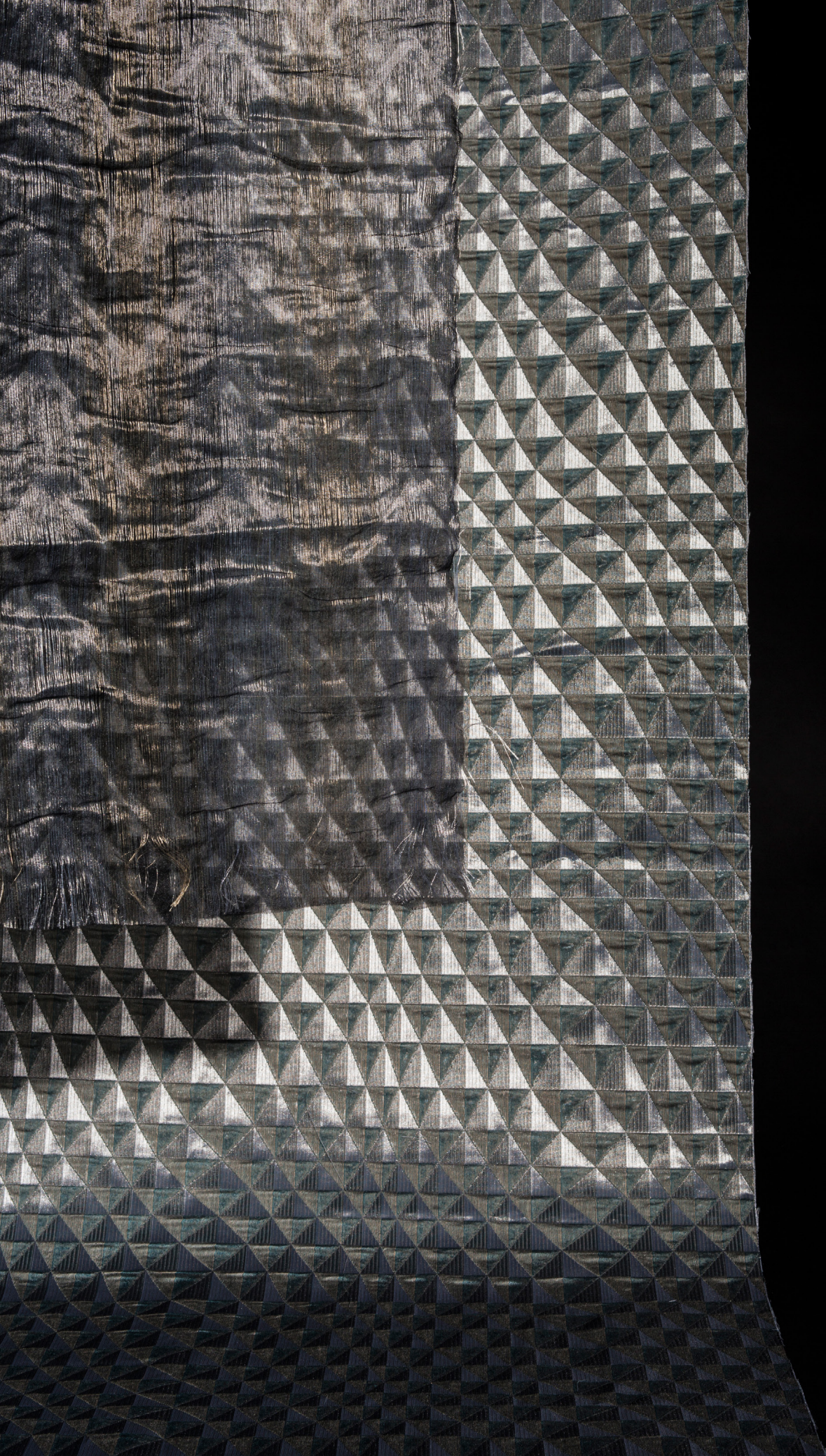


Figure 47.



## Metallic Light / North Europe

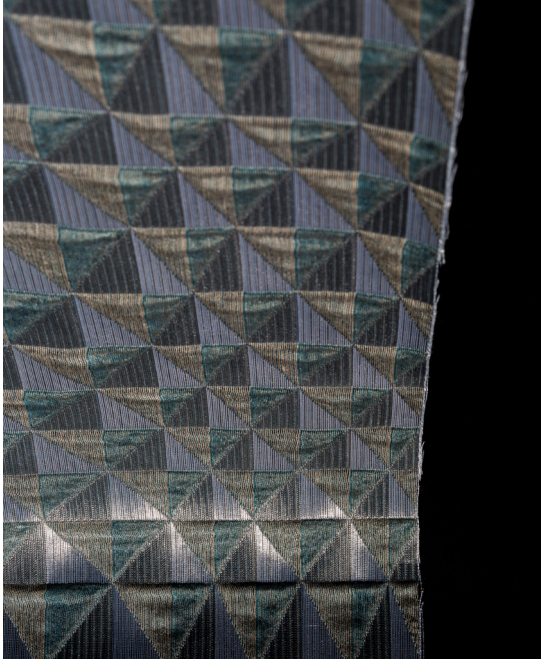


Figure 48.

### 23751 B

This pattern design exploits similar idea as the pattern 23748 B. The size of the triangle elements varies, creating movement in the design. Although, the fabric appears heavy, it is rather lightweight and see-through depending on the lighting. Half of the triangles in the pattern design are created by using double weave structure. The metallic shrinking yarns on the top of the fabric are placed on the backside of the double weave pockets, creating three-dimensionality.

Material: Trevira CS

Loom: Sara Black



Figure 49.

### 23765 A

The aim in this design was to bring out the zigzag pattern and create three-dimensionality by placing shrinking yarns inside of double weave pockets. Additionally, I experimented with the dégradé effect by selecting different tones of shrinking yarns. The fabric is very see-through, and the pattern appears only in certain lighting. The double weave creates a wrinkly look for the fabric and tones down the metallic effect.

Material: Trevira CS

Loom: Starlight Black



## Organic Imperfection / The UK and The USA

Figure 50.



### 23756 A

The intention in this design was to create a large scaled, organic pattern and experiment with the bindings and the usage of thick, special yarns. I focused on using neutral colours, although I exploited a few colours, which were chosen for Proposte 2018. My aim was creating an interesting design by using a limited amount of special yarns. I chose loose bindings for the special yarns and played with the bindings to create double-sided effect. The fabric appears different on opposite sides, but both sides could work as “the right side”, depending of the customers preferences. The fabric is woven on linen loom and the weft yarns are flame-retardant polyester.

Material: Linen, Trevira CS

Loom: Viola 2

Figure 51.



### 23745 A

In this fil coupé design, I concentrated creating a mid-scaled, full and prestige but playful and colourful surface while maintaining the organic, natural and matt look. Additionally, I experimented with the wash finishing of the fabric, which opened the loosely twisted weft yarn and changed their look to resemble feathers. The fabric is woven on linen loom and the weft yarns are flame-retardant Trevira CS. The colours of the fabric were chosen to suit the Proposte 2018.

Material: Linen, Trevira CS

Loom: Viola 1



Figure 52.







Figure 53.



## Organic Imperfection / The UK and The USA



Figure 54.

### 23757 A

As the design 23756 A, this fabric is double-sided. In the mid-scale pattern design, I experimented with the combination of geometric and organic elements. The base of the fabric is woven with Trevira CS weft, which resembles linen. The thick, special yarns are used infrequently to save in material expenses without affecting the look of the fabric. The bindings for the base yarns are tight while the special yarns exploit looser bindings. The fabric is woven on linen loom and the weft yarns are flame-retardant Trevira CS. The colours of the fabric were aimed at the UK and the USA.

Material: Linen, Trevira CS

Loom: Viola 2



Figure 55.

### 23760 A

This fil coupé design plays with similar aspects as the design 23745 A. However, I focused on developing a surface, which contains more empty space and where the colours are more toned down. Additionally, I played with the lace structure, which creates the small branches before the fringes. The geometric pattern resembles more organic with the feathery weft fringes. The fabric is woven on linen loom and the weft yarns are flame-retardant Trevira CS.

Material: Linen, Trevira CS

Loom: Iris 1

## Organic Imperfection / The UK and The USA

### 23736 B

The pattern of this mid-scaled fil coupé design was inspired of the ikat<sup>18</sup> technique. Additionally, I was interested in experimenting with the waffle<sup>19</sup> structure in a new way. The colours were chosen to function with the other designs, natural yet colourful. The fabric is woven on EST o3 loom, which is thicker than the most common Lodetex's Trevira CS looms. The weight of the fabric is between lightweight and middle weight. However, I decided to include the fabric in the idea portfolio as it is aimed at the UK and the USA.

Material: Trevira CS

Loom: EST o3

18 A textile fabric is called ikat when the yarn is tied for dyeing and weaving purposes. A technique that developed in northeastern Asia and spread to India, Malaysia and Africa. Ikat designs appear similar to reflections in water, therefore the blurry effect. (Tortora & Merkel, 1996: 280.)

19 Also called as honeycomb weave. A weave that produces a textured surface fabric with a pattern of squares or diamond shapes similar in appearance to a honeycomb. The ridges outlining the squares or diamonds are raised above the centers by floating both the warp and filling (weft) and gradually decreasing the floats from the ridges. (Tortora & Merkel, 1996: 274.)

Figure 56.



Figure 57.



### 23740 A

The aim in this design was to exploit Lodetex's new loom, which is a mixture of wool and Trevira CS to create a simple, lightweight and natural looking fabric with neutral colours. The scale of the disordered pattern is relatively small. The pattern disappears when looking at it from a distance. The structure is a combination of plain weave and satin. The weft yarns are a mixture of Trevira CS and wool.

Material: Trevira CS, Wool

Loom: Mixture of Trevira CS and Wool



Figure 58.







Figure 59.



## Organic Imperfection / The UK and The USA



Figure 60.

### 41399 V8

This mid-scaled pattern is digitally printed on a woven fabric base, which resembles linen. However, the material is 100 % Trevira CS. I focused on creating a hand painted, modern, bold and abstract yet decorative organic pattern. I developed many colours for this pattern but the final colours were selected to suit the Proposte 2018 collections.

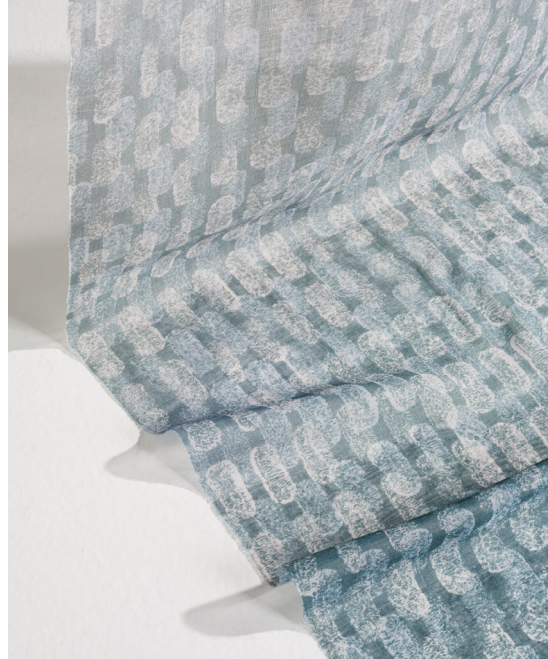


Figure 61.

### 41406 V3

This design is large scaled dégradé pattern, which is digitally printed on the same base as the design 41399 V8. Inside the dégradé, I developed a smaller scaled pattern, which is inspired by the idea of imperfect, stamped surface. I created many versions of this pattern with different colours, but this version suited the idea portfolio the best.

### 3.3. Feedback & Reflections

As I noticed during the design process and while gathering the background research, textile editors' tastes and styles in various geographic market areas were difficult to point out. As many of the interviewees stated, the world is globalized and so are the interior fabric styles and preferences. The textile editor companies are often international corporations, which all develop several different collection lines or operate different brands aimed at various customers and geographic market areas. However, as discovered in previous sections, the differences between textile editors in various geographic market areas still exist.

Besides pointing out the textile editors' differences and similarities in the previous sections, I gathered feedback of the idea portfolios to understand whether I managed creating fabrics for the textile editors in the selected market areas. I received feedback from Lodetex throughout the design process. Furthermore, I presented the idea portfolios and discussed them with Tiina Ventelä (9.10.2018), who works as a contract sales manager at the Finnish textile editor Lauritzon's, as she has a wide knowledge of different interior textile editors and the characteristics of various geographic market areas. However, Ventelä mentioned that her knowledge from the USA market is not as strong as from the other areas.

I divided the textile idea portfolios into two groups according to their aesthetics and material qualities. The fabrics with natural looks and usage of linen and wool were aimed at the UK and the USA and the fabrics with metallic effects at North Europe. In general, the feedback I received during and after the design process was good. During my stay in Italy, the design director of Lodetex, Valentina Molteni (9.5.2018) pointed out that part of the fabrics in the textile idea portfolios could suit the textile editors in the UK and in the USA or even in France. Additionally, she mentioned that the very graphic patterns suit

the textile editors in Germany and other parts of North Europe.

Lodetex's fabrics contain certain elegance and the style of Lodetex self-evidently influenced also my designs. A few of the fabrics, especially the designs 23748 B and 23749 A contained too bright colours for Lodetex. The fabrics are often presented for the textile editors in rather neutral colours enabling the textile editors to modify them to suit their colourways. However, a few brighter colours raise the textile editors' interest and potentially bring new customers. Therefore, I chose the bright colours to emphasize the visual effects of the fabrics. The fabrics might suit the Scandinavian textile editors, such as Kvadrat and Kinnasand better than the German ones.

As I noticed myself, and what Ventelä (9.10.2018) also stated, many of the natural looking fabrics resembled more Scandinavian than American or British. On the other hand, Ventelä mentioned that for example in the UK, the so-called Scandinavian style is very popular now. Furthermore, Ventelä considered that the colourful, metallic and see-through fabrics could as well suit the market in the USA as the fabric selection there is wide with multiple variations and alternatives.

According to Ventelä (9.10.2018), the customers are searching specific coloured fabrics and even more importantly fabrics for specific purposes. For example, the lightweight curtain fabrics are often used in glass buildings or in meeting rooms. Therefore, all the fabrics could function in any of the textile editors' collections depending of the intent place of usage. Additionally, an important aspect to consider when designing e.g. for hotel purposes, is the scale of the design repeat. The hotels can exploit even the largest motifs and repeats. Almost all my designs are mid-scaled because of the restrictions in the repeat size, although there is a possibility to create full fabric width patterns at Lodetex. However, large scaled de-

signs are mainly created according to the customer requests or for other specific purposes.

Furthermore, Ventelä (9.10.2018) gave general feedback of the textile idea portfolios. She mentioned that the fabrics' bindings and colours were well selected. Additionally, she pointed out that my Finnish origin shows in the designs. She was delighted seeing colourful but still elegant and unique designs. Moreover, Ventelä considered the double-sided fabrics being especially interesting as they could function in glass buildings.

Many of the textile professionals mentioned the customers being rather conservative when selecting curtains. They pointed out that neutral coloured plain fabrics are the most favoured curtains. However, all the textile editors already create the plain fabrics and therefore I aimed creating visually attractive fabrics, which would raise the interest of the textile editors. I browsed through Lodetex's trend forecasting materials while my stay there. Nevertheless, I did not consider the trends consciously during the design process, whilst I am sure that they affected the fabrics, as the designs act as a reflection of society and society affects the trends. Furthermore, I recognized a connection between the textile idea portfolios and the findings from the textile professionals' interviews and the case studies, although there were also several aspects, I could have considered more during the design process, for example the colour differences and the fabrics' weight.





Figure 62. Designs 23760 A & 41399 V8 from Organic Imperfection idea portfolio

## 4. Conclusion

The intention of this thesis was to compare textile editors' taste and style differences and to develop two idea portfolios of woven and digitally printed lightweight curtain fabrics based on my assumptions, aimed at various textile editors in the selected geographic market areas.

As a result of this thesis I gained new knowledge through the design practice and the background research. The background research deepened my understanding of the textile industry and the aspects affecting the textile editors' style and taste differences and similarities. I received valuable information about the topics that I was investigating, especially through the email interviews and the personal discussions with the textile professionals. Additionally, the literature and online sources expanded my knowledge greatly. The design and development process of the textile idea portfolios improved my technical skills, which are essential to design woven fabrics, and receiving the feedback helped me to position my work in the textile field.

Starting the design process based on my assumptions and having limited knowledge of the textile editors' and geographic market areas' differences was challenging. I struggled finding information about the topic due to the lack of literature and the tight schedule of the design process. Furthermore, not managing to interview anyone from the USA despite my contacting attempts was demanding. Afterwards, while examining the email interviews, due to the lack of my interviewing experience, I noticed that by arranging the interviewing questions differently, I could have received more defined answers. Nevertheless, solving the challenges encouraged me and expanded my knowledge.

Inspecting the design practise, making the decision of creating the fabrics based on my limited knowledge and assumptions, gave me an interesting perspective for the thesis. I expanded my knowledge by experimenting with the designs, comparing my assumptions with the gathered knowledge and by allowing myself to make mistakes. Technical mistakes occurred especially in the beginning of the design process, when I recalled the technical knowledge, which I learned during the internship. Due to the short stay in Italy, inspecting all the designs woven on the loom and adjusting them, was not possible. However, I managed selecting the weft densities, colours, bindings and materials in a way that many of the designs worked on the loom. A few of the fabrics are still in an idea level and would need technical adjustments.

Furthermore, considering the material usage, which is an essential skill for a textile designer, played a great part in my design process. I was proud to solve the technical issues without affecting the look of the fabrics. Sometimes the fascination about the technical and visual aspects lead me to wrong tracks. However, I learned by doing and managed pulling myself back and maintained the balance between my own view, Lodetex's style and the textile editors' taste and style.

Generally, I am satisfied with the results of the design practice, although one could argue if all the fabrics fit their aimed geographic area. I have received positive feedback about the fabrics and the idea portfolios. During and after the design practice, I noticed how strongly I was affected by the Nordic, Scandinavian and Finnish styles. Nevertheless, managing to point that out will help me to design for wider groups of customers in the future.

## CONCLUSION

Although, my intention was to develop groups of individual designs, the idea portfolios conform surprisingly well together as collections. I recognize the connection between the design concept, moodboards and the idea portfolios. Furthermore, I am proud of the visually attractive and decorative fabrics, although the plain fabrics are most commonly used as curtains. My designs could be combined with the plain fabrics, adding value to the space.

The topic of this thesis is wide, despite defining the goals and concentrating on specific aspects. Although, the investigation and the fabric development could be continued, the thesis expanded my research and design skills significantly. Therefore, I feel that I succeeded reaching the objectives of this thesis. During the design process, I realized that the understanding of the various tastes and styles develops over time, and I need more experience in the interior textile field to truly understand its characteristics. However, the experiences in the weaving mill strengthened my professional identity and confidence as a textile designer. In the future, my goal is to gain more knowledge and develop my textile design skills while focusing more on durability and sustainability issues without affecting the visual aspects.

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### Email Interviews

Adams, Adrian. Textile Agent, Weavers Gallery. Email Interview (14.5.2018).

Apelgren, Johanna. Textile Engineer, Kvadrat. Email Interview (15.5.2018).

Frei, Nicole. Textile Designer, Sahco. Email Interview (21.5.2018).

### Image References

Cover: Photo by Eeva Suorlahti. (2018).

Figure 1-2. Photo by Eeva Suorlahti. (2018).

Figure 3. Photo by Ilona Damski. (2018).

Figure 4. WGSN website screenshot. [online] Available: <https://www.wgsn.com/en/products/lifestyle-interiors/> [Accessed: 21.10.2018].

Figure 5. Textile View #123. [online] Available: <http://view-publications.com> [Accessed: 19.10.2018].

Figure 6. PANTONEVIEW Colour Planner Autumn/Winter 2018/19. [online] Available: <https://www.pantone.com/color-intelligence/fashion-color-trend-report/fashion-color-trend-report-new-york-fall-winter-2018> [Accessed: 19.10.2018].

Figure 7. Tritone. [online] Available for downloading: <http://kinnasand.com/press> [Accessed: 17.10.2018].

Figure 8. New Kinnasand collection: Tailor Made. [online] Available: <https://kvadrat.dk/press-room/press/new-kinnasand-collection-tailor-made> [Accessed: 17.10.2018].

Figure 9. Kvadrat in use. UK. [online] Available for downloading: <https://kvadrat.dk/catalogues-and-brochures> [Accessed: 17.10.2018].

Figure 10. Collections. Autumn 2018. [online] Available: [https://www.sahco.com/en/collections/fabrics/93-autumn\\_2018/](https://www.sahco.com/en/collections/fabrics/93-autumn_2018/) [Accessed: 17.10.2018].

Figure 11. Collections. Fabrics. Collection 2018. [online] Available: [https://www.sahco.com/en/collections/fabrics/92-collection\\_2018/#](https://www.sahco.com/en/collections/fabrics/92-collection_2018/#) [Accessed: 17.10.2018].

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Figure 14. Gardenia. Prints and Embroideries. [online] Available: <https://www.romo.com/collections/prints-weaves/gardenia> [Accessed: 17.10.2018].

Figure 15. Floris. Decorative Weaves & Prints. [online] Available: <https://www.romo.com/collections/prints-weaves/floris> [Accessed: 17.10.2018].

Figure 16. Sesia. Wide-Width FR Weaves. [online] Available: <https://www.romo.com/collections/prints-weaves/sesia> [Accessed: 17.10.2018].

Figure 17. Floris. Decorative Weaves & Prints. [online] Available: <https://www.romo.com/collections/prints-weaves/floris> [Accessed: 17.10.2018].

Figure 18. DwellStudio Modern Drama. [online] Available: <https://www.robertallendesign.com/dwellstudio-gallery-collection> [Accessed: 17.10.2018].

Figure 19. Color Library Glided Color. [online] Available: <https://www.robertallendesign.com/robert-allen-collection-gallery> [Accessed: 17.10.2018].

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Figure 21. DwellStudio Modern Drama. [online]  
Available: <https://www.robertallendesign.com/dwellstudio-gallery-collection> [Accessed:  
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Figure 22. Photo by Eeva Suorlahti. (2018).

Figure 23-26. Photo by Jeremy Däpp. (2018).

Figure 27-31. Photo by Ilona Damski. (2018).

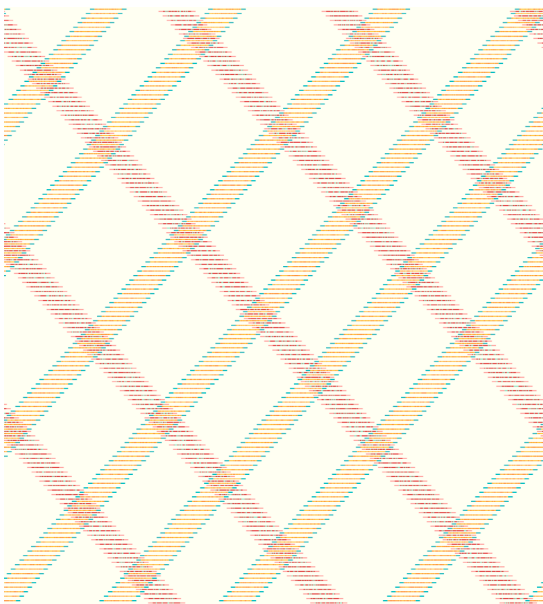
Figure 32-35. Photo by Jeremy Däpp. (2018).

Figure 36-62. Photo by Eeva Suorlahti. (2018).

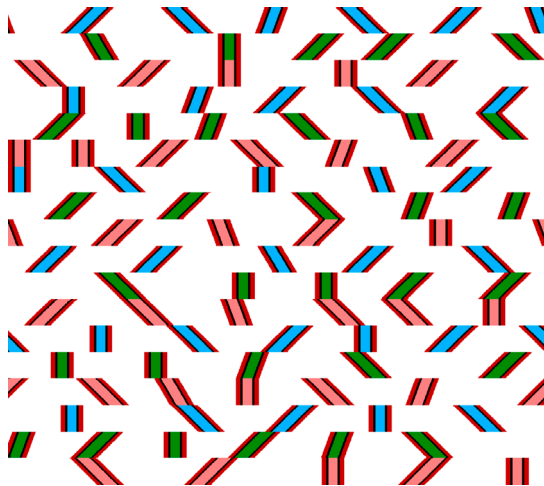


# Appendix

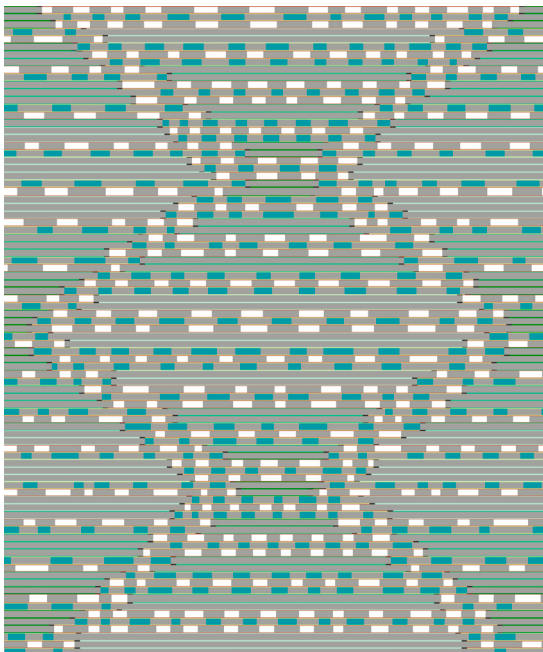
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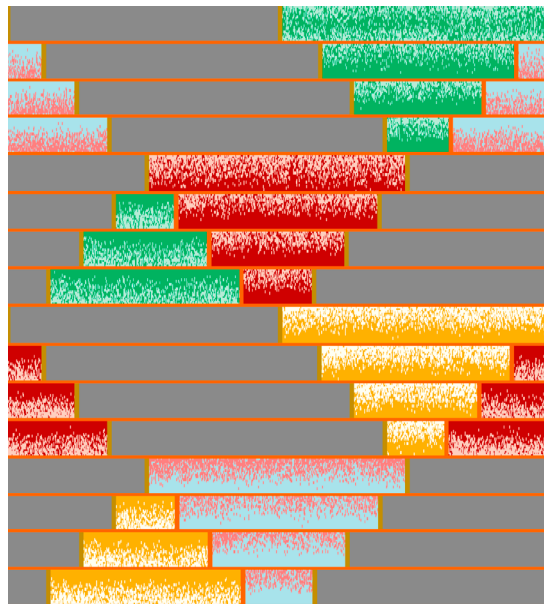
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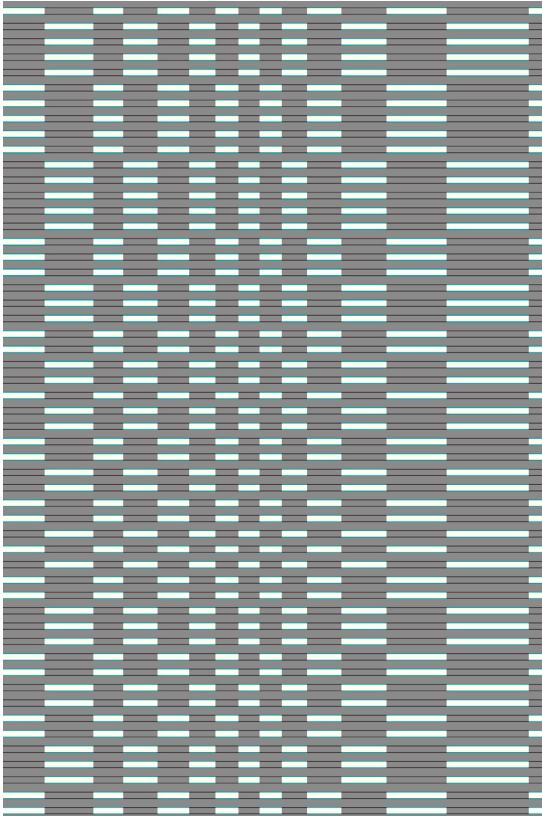


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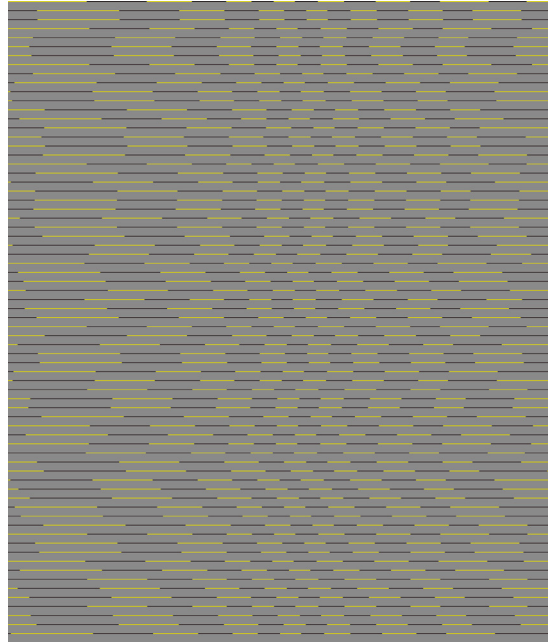


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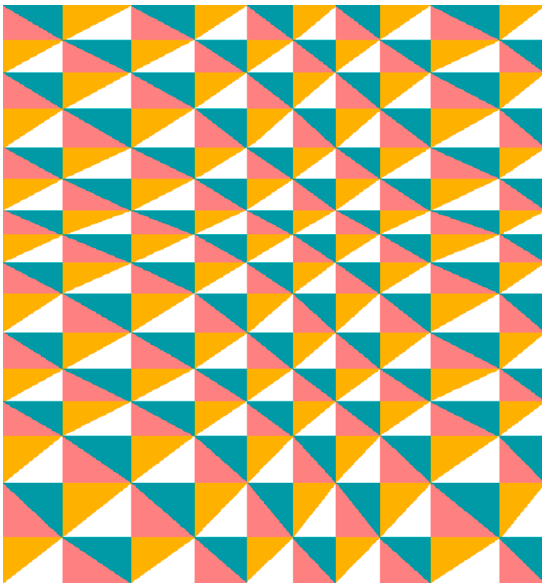
APPENDIX



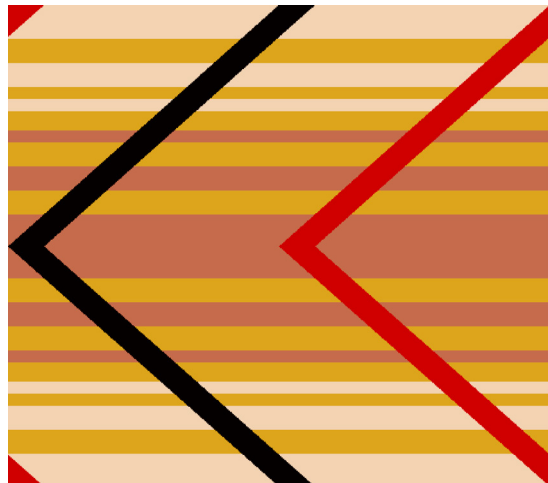
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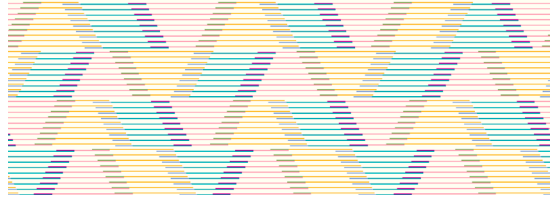


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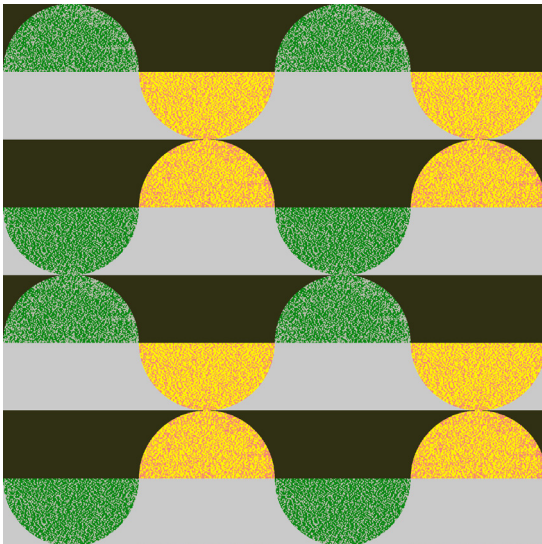
## APPENDIX



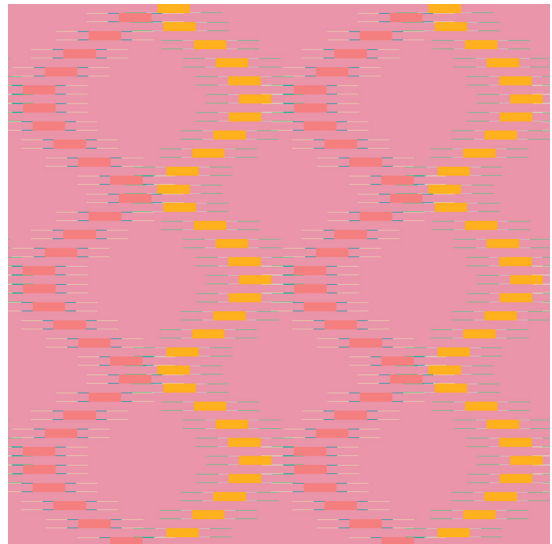
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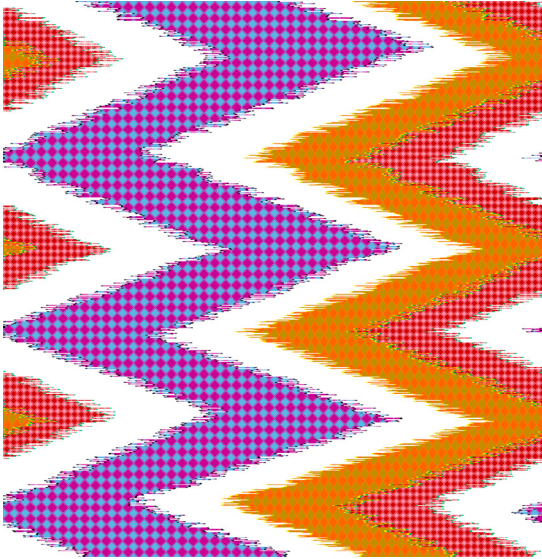
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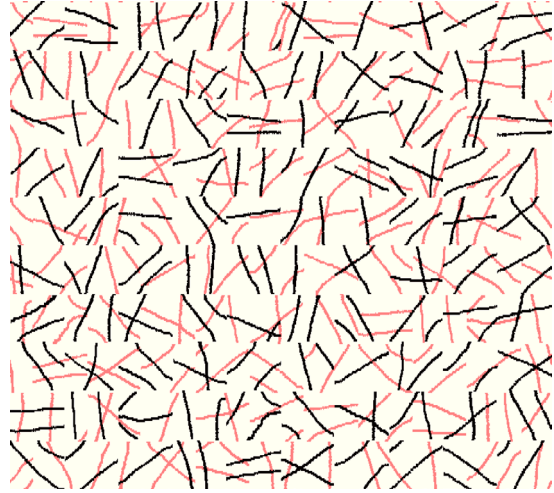
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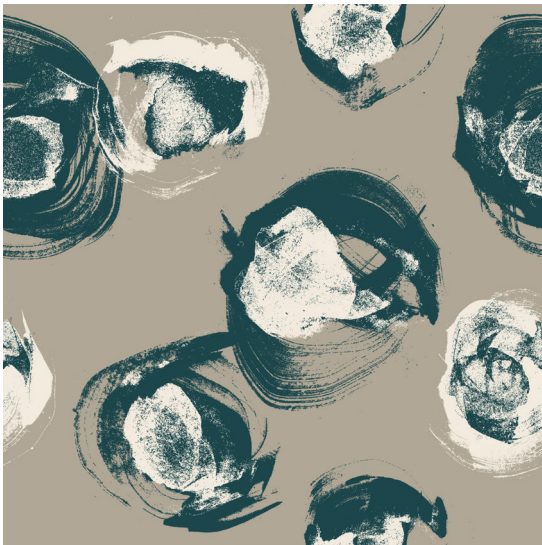
APPENDIX



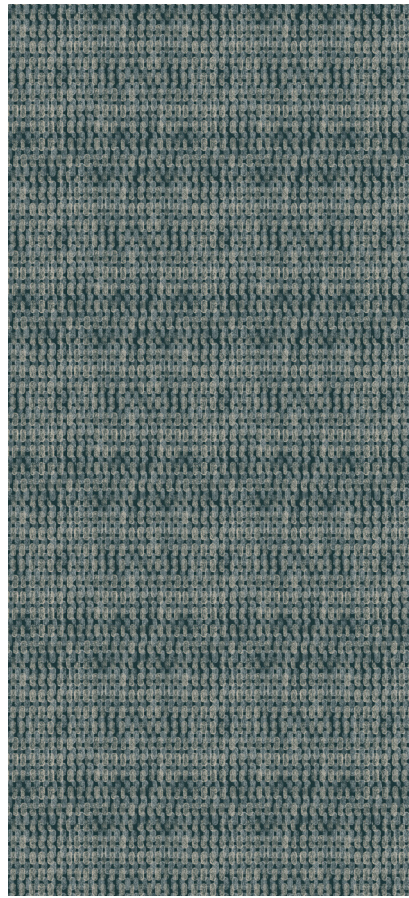
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41399 V8



41406 V3

Adams, Adrian. Textile Agent, Weavers Gallery.  
Email Interview (14.5.2018).

**Ilona Damski: Can you tell me a bit about yourself and about Weavers Gallery? What are your responsibilities at Weavers Gallery?**

Weavers Gallery was started as a Textile Agency in 1980 by Peter and Claire Peacock. Claire ran the office while Peter visited and sold fabrics to UK customers on behalf of different Mills from all over the world. I am currently Managing Director and have worked in the business since 1994. In 2001 I bought the agency together with Jonathan Oakes from Peter Peacock, and currently the agency is jointly owned by Jonathan and myself. We have a small showroom at our offices and 2 staff working as Sales Coordinators supporting and backing up the business generated by both Salesmen. Our role as agents is to secure orders for our mills and to support the sales process as well as deal with rejected goods and chase customer invoices for payment.

**As I understood, you work as an agent representing various companies. What are your biggest clients in North America/UK and in North Europe?**

Weavers Gallery represents DDecor from India (producing volume plain and jacquard curtain and upholstery fabrics aimed at the lower to middle market), Swadeshi from India (producing top end silks/cottons jacquard and embroideries), Imatex from Italy (producing jacquard and dobby weaves for the middle to top end upholstery), Kets from Turkey (producing plain and jacquard fabric for the lower and middle end of upholstery).

Our largest customers on the curtain business are the big international editors and wholesalers such as Prestigious Textiles, SMD, Ashley Wilde, Harlequin, Villa Nova. We also supply the top end editors such as Designers Guild, Colefax & Fowler, Romo Group. We also deal with the big Retailers

such as John Lewis, Marks & Spencer, Laura Ashley and Next. All our customers are in the UK & Ireland only although the wholesalers sell all over the world.

**Do you think that geographical market areas exist (a difference in taste, style)? In my thesis study I will compare the American/UK market and the North European (Germany, Denmark...) market. Can you mention any differences in those (taste, style, fabric qualities)?**

There are definitely differences in tastes from different geographical areas of the world (I know the UK very well but also a little about other markets). Traditionally the UK would use net curtains instead of blinds and then would use heavier weight curtains to keep out the light and keep in the warmth. This has changed in the last 20 years in that net curtains are not used as much and blinds are increasingly being used in homes. In addition the traditional types of designs, damasks, florals etc are being replaced by more modern designs, geometrics and multicolours. Plains are very strong in all areas of the market. Colours are the biggest area of difference with other areas as in the UK colours are very simple and the best sellers are naturals, beiges and greys. North America is much more into sludgy darker colours, whilst Northern Europe use more colour along with metallic type shades. Generally mainland Europe uses lighter weight fabrics (such as made by Lodetex) and the UK uses much heavier fabrics such as chenilles and velvets.

**What are the curtain / decoration fabric trends at the moment and what are the growing trends in the future? What are the most interesting techniques, fabric qualities, patterns, colours etc for you and your clients at the moment / in the future?**

Trends in the UK do not change very much and tend to be similar from year to year. At the moment grey and linen are very strong in terms of colour (but the

usual neutrals always sell!) and Foil prints giving metallic looks are really in trend, both on furniture and on curtains, although I think this will move on shortly. Colours that sell seem to be softer in tone, with greyed off blues/greens/pinks of a pastel nature. Higher in the market plain velvet is consistent along with heavy embroideries (which can justify a higher price as look more value). There is more colour around at the top end and multicolour small scale geometrics are very in vogue.

**How often do the interior fabric trends change and do the trends vary in different market areas?**

Trend as I have mentioned do not change very much in the UK. The Retailers try to bring in different looks with more multicolour prints for example in one year as opposed to the last years, but the general market is consistent from year to year. Unfortunately, the UK is a little basic in taste and goes with very conservative designs and colours!

Apelgren, Johanna. Textile Engineer, Kvadrat. Email Interview (15.5.2018).

**Ilona Damski: Can you tell me a bit about yourself? What are your responsibilities at Kvadrat?**

My name is Johanna and I'm an educated Textile engineer from The Swedish school of textiles in Borås. I work in the product development in a team of 6 of which we are two textile engineers. Our focus is new suppliers, new technologies and sustainability. Products with recycled content or treatments are examples of projects that we are in charge of. The most recent product that I have been coordinating the development for is two acoustic curtains produced at Lodetex.

**How would you describe the style of Kvadrat?**

Kvadrat do not work with trends. We have a 10 year warranty on all our textiles and we aim for our products to be age-less. One of our bestsellers is the first textile that we launched back in the 60ths. We work with many different designers to give our collection a width that would be very challenging to obtain with just an inhouse design team. With that said, our inhouse team is an important part of giving each collection the Kvadrat DNA. Our style is influenced by our love for color and the will to push technological and esthetical boundaries. We focus a lot on quality and that goes into every decision from the exact tone of a red in a collection to the performance specifications. As we do not compromise and do not focus on trends we achieve a classic style with a twist as we are always looking ahead.

**Which kind of curtain fabrics (qualities, colours...) Kvadrat is concentrating on at the moment?**

We are concentrating a lot on curtains with special properties. Examples of this are sheer curtains which



absorbs a lot of sound, curtain with special light transmission/remission, black outs, dim outs etc.

**Where do you get the inspiration to your collections?**

Everywhere! It sounds like a cliché but it's true. We also get a lot of input from the designers and the suppliers we are working with. It can be a weave sample that sparks the imagination of one of our design coordinators or a photograph on pinterest or a lovely wall color in Milan.

**Do you think that geographical market areas exist (a difference in taste, style)? In my thesis study I will compare the American/UK market and the North European(Germany, Denmark...) market. Can you mention any differences in those (taste, style, fabric qualities)?**

For sure. We can definitely see that the climate effects what the customers are looking for. If it's a warm area where most people do not wear full length trousers, they are not keen on wool as it is itchy on bare skin. Here they want soft cotton etc.

In our field of business performance specifications have a big impact on what fabrics that are chosen for projects. These differ from country to country. For example, in the state they do not want flame retardant fabrics but in Europe the flame retardant polyester Trevira CS are somewhat a standard for big projects. Hospitals in Denmark do not want to use antibacterial fabrics, but in Asia they are more interested in using it.

When it comes to style like patterns, colors etc, the differences are fading more and more as taste is getting more global with technology. We read the same magazines, blogs and so on. We use Instagram and pinterest and go to the same fairs.

What are the curtain / decoration fabric trends at the moment and what are the growing trends in the future? What are the most interesting techniques,

fabric qualities, patterns, colours etc for Kvadrat at the moment / in the future?

Technical curtains are for sure on the rise. (as mentioned before).

Besides that we experience that customers are quite conservative when it comes to curtains. Plain colors and plain constructions are the most popular qualities.

**How often do the trends change and do the trends vary in different market areas?**

I can't say that much about trends as we do not focus on that.

We can see that good design works and keep on working. As I mentioned, one of our bestsellers is a quality from the 60ths. We also see that our new fabrics often need a bit of time to get settled in the market. In the field of interior, people are not as keen on change as they are with fashion. If you buy an expensive sofa, you want it to be "in style" for a long period.

Frei, Nicole. Textile Designer, Sahco. Email Interview (21.5.2018).

**Ilona Damski: Can you tell me a bit about yourself? What are your responsibilities at Sahco?**

**How would you describe the style of Sahco?**

**Which kind of curtain fabrics (qualities, colours...) Sahco is concentrating on at the moment?**

**Where do you get the inspiration to your collections?**

**Do you think that geographical market areas exist (a difference in taste, style)? In my thesis I will compare the American/UK market and the North European (Germany, Denmark...) market. Can you mention any differences in those (taste, style, fabric qualities)?**

**What are the curtain / decoration fabric trends at the moment and what are the growing trends in the future? What are the most interesting techniques, fabric qualities, patterns, colours etc for Sahco at the moment / in the future?**

**How often do the trends change and do the trends vary in different market areas?**

I am Nicole Frei, a German textile designer with international weaving background from various jobs and internships in the interior textile industry, who has started working for German textile editor Sahco last year in August. At Sahco we are a team of 3

designers in the design department. The responsibilities we share and it starts of course with collection work for 2 collections a year with different product groups. The main product is fabric, but we're also developing rugs, accessories and home collections. Beside we're working together with the marketing department to create our public appearance (Photoshootings, books, magazines, fairs e.g.) and we're collaborating with quality and purchase department to get the articles right and registered in our system. Presentation of our products is also one responsibility we're facing regularly during workshops and fairs. This is a short introduction to my job that gives you a kind of overview into the Sahco creative world.

The style of Sahco is said to be timeless, elegant and contemporary. For me the Sahco style is much more about details, that you can discover in every of the unique fabric qualities we have in our collection.

At the moment Sahco's curtain fabrics are all of double-width, of different blends (not only Trevira for an distinctive look) and are all special in the way the hand is: They are soft or coarse, they are wooly or linen-alike. All articles are very good to drape. We are working on plains and semi-plains as well as on real jacquard designs with full repeat.

The question of inspiration is diverse: we are inspired of many things. First of all we are inspired by our incredible creative suppliers then we are very much inspired about the things that are going on in our world. For sure we have a closer look to fashion and interiors, but we're also getting inspiration by a wonderful flower blossoming in early spring.

Yes, of course I feel a difference in global market areas regarding the use of textiles, their style and taste.

I also see a strong contrast in both markets you are investigating, but not only for fabric style/taste and quality, also in colour. To mention all these differences is difficult, I advise to compare the most successful brands by their presentation. Then the result is evident.

Thinking about trends is an important topic but it should never influence your inner creativity.

## APPENDIX

Considering trends is inevitable, especially in our time, though you always have to know your role as an economical model in which you are following trends. This discussion is wide, therefore I go directly to the second question in your phrase: at the moment Sahco is trying to achieve the same success with well-running curtain fabrics by developing newer ones. These are mostly plains or semi-plains, always special in their composition, technique or finishing but always plain-looking. The well running colours are the neutrals, lighter tones and all the whites.

Your last question is again referring to trends, their global influences and their changes. For me this is all as already said a matter of view and look and too all-embracing that it is hard to describe it now in a few sentences. Therefore I close this interview by now.



